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NFL

Interviews with Bert Jones, Walter Payton, and Other Pro Football Personalities

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Baltimore's Bert Jones

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The Official National Football League Annual for 1977

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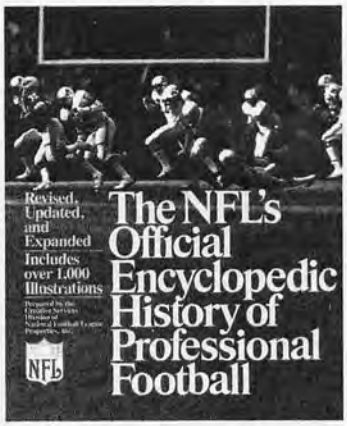
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Conversations

Five NFL notables talk about the sport and their careers

Dave Casper

Tight End, Oakland Raiders

Dave Casper has been called "Ghost" by his Oakland Raiders' teammates almost from the day he joined the club as a second-round draft choice out of Notre Dame in 1974.

In his first two years with the Raiders, Casper frequently acted ghost-like. A fine blocker at the tight end position, Casper had just nine receptions in two seasons.

There were reasons for this, however. For one, the Raiders already had Bob Moore, a fine tight end. For another, Oakland signed Ted Kwalick, a bruising seven-year pro with solid credentials in mid-1975.

Casper's patience was rewarded dramatically in 1976, however, and today he rates as one of the key reasons the Raiders were able to erase the can't-win-the-big-one reputation. In one dramatic season, Casper helped to invigorate the Raiders' offense with a blend of pass catching and blocking that culminated in that 32-14 rout of Minnesota in Super Bowl XI.

Casper's first-quarter pass reception of 25 yards from Ken Stabler set up Errol Mann's opening field goal, and his one-yard catch for a touchdown put Minnesota in a 10-0 hole.

After the 1975 season, most people considered Moore and Kwalick to be ahead of you at tight end. But when the 1976 season started, Moore was gone and you had beaten out Kwalick for the starting job. How did it happen so fast?

"By late 1975 I think it was just becoming evident—at least to me—that I would start in 1976. The Raiders just decided to make a change and they let Bob Moore go in the expansion draft. I think at the end of 1975 it was almost understood that I would start in 1976. We never publicized it, though, and I guess a lot of people around here thought Ted would be the starter. But I never really was worried.

"Oh, there was some question in my mind whether I'd make it because I had never actually started two consecutive games in the NFL. It was just simply a matter of my proving I could do the job. They knew what Ted Kwalick could do, and I knew that if I didn't do the job, I'd be back on the bench fast. But I had certain things going for me that Ted didn't have. I'm a good blocker, for example. It was really just a matter of whether I'd be a good receiver, because I hadn't been in game situations where we'd thrown the ball much. I had to develop some of that stuff.

When he's not on the field, Dave Casper shows intense interest in the Raiders' defense.

Blocking is my forte. That's what I do. It's always been my big thing. They usually brought me in in short-yardage situations. They always put me on the left side, next to Art Shell and Gene Upshaw, and we'd pretty much run to that side."

You must have worked hard at catching the ball, because you had 53 receptions, eighth among all receivers and number one among tight ends.

"That's really a deceiving number because I caught a lot of short passes. The thing that really pleased me the most was winning the Super Bowl. Maybe that's because we were one of the few teams that ever got to the Super Bowl primarily because of offense. Most teams had come riding in on defense. But I do believe our defense was a lot better than people thought. As far as personal satisfaction goes, though, I think my ten touchdowns pleased me most. I think the most consistent thing I did during the season was my blocking. Especially on short-yardage situations, and sweeps and off-tackle plays. I think you

"I'm not an all-year-round conditioner. I lift weights and that's about all I do. And I try to take care of all the injuries I had the year before."

can put a lot of pressure on a defense if you start running the ball to the strongside. And if you can run the ball to the strongside well, that makes your weakside passing pretty good, because they have to rotate their defense that way. And they can't rotate their defenses over to Cliff Branch because they'll be hurting on the runs. So if I came out of a game blocking well, then I felt I had had a good game. And if my receiving was good . . . well, that's just a bonus."

The Raiders were a remarkably disciplined team last year, especially when you consider the club had about a dozen free agents.

"A lot of clubs, especially those with poor management, don't give people enough of a shot. If a guy's a little different, they get worried about him and get rid of him. But your best clubs say, 'So what if you're a little goofy. Everyone's a little goofy. We'll take you as long as you're not goofy on the field.' Everyone's got some problems. Instead of just getting rid of a guy, I think it's better to work with their problems.

"John Matuszak had a lot of problems with other teams and I think a lot of clubs were just too quick to pass judgment. I mean, instead of trying to help him, they'd jump all over him. Well, he had some problems when he came to us, but everybody on the team said, 'We want you to play here, so just settle down.' He might have been the biggest factor in our defense being what it was. He stuck it to people all year long. He played like an all-pro last year. If you watched what he was doing out there, he was destroying people.

Last season's Raiders were more of a finesse team, as opposed to some of the previous Super Bowl participants who used raw power. Did you realize what a smooth team you had?

"I do know that playing alongside Art Shell and Gene Upshaw helped all three of us in various situations. For example, on certain plays where I'm supposed to be double-teamed with Art on the left side, if Gene is having some trouble with his guy, Art will let me take our guy by myself and he'll go down and double-team with Gene. Now in 1975, I don't think we could have done that because Bob [Moore] wasn't as physical a blocker as I am. The same thing is true on the other side. If Gene is really handling his guy, Art may give me a better bump in a place where he doesn't have to go down as quickly. So if you combine a couple of good ball players next to each other, you can go where you're needed."

Various reports last year claimed the game was rougher than ever. Is this true?

"I haven't noticed any difference in the physical punishment. Bob Thomas, the kicker for the Chicago Bears, said something like, 'Every year it seems the sportswriters pick on one aspect of the game and bring it up.' And that's true. I didn't notice it getting any rougher last year than the year before. I didn't think those defensive backs were hitting me any harder."

After going 13-1 in the regular season and then winning the Super Bowl is there any chance the Raiders might be overconfident this year?

"I think if you did that two or three years in a row you could get fat. But I don't think you get all that overconfident from winning it just one year. We've had a lot of seasons before where we ran right over people and then lost the playoff game. But we've also had eight- or nine-game winning streaks and then all of a sudden . . . boom, we got knocked off by some crummy team. So I think we all realize that you have to go out and practice. Reporters are always asking, 'How are you going to do next year?' Well, hell, if I knew I wouldn't have to play the games."

How do you stay in shape during the off-season?

"I don't. I just do minor things. I'm not an all-year-round conditioner. I lift weights and that's about all I do. And I try to take care of all the injuries I had the year before. For the first four months after the season I just try to heal. Oh, I run now and then, maybe once a week or so. And I was in the Superstars, but I didn't even train for that because I was more concerned about healing my ankle. I had a bad right ankle left over from last year and I wanted to get that healed. Some people are twelve-month runners. They just love to run around. I'm not that way. I figure, I work pretty hard during the season and I just want to relax during the off-season. About two months before the season starts I'll start running again."

What is your favorite recreation activity?

"I try to do a lot of different things. I just bought some woodworking tools. And I like to hammer nails and stuff. And as a football player, you've got a lot of other stuff to do, like speaking engagements.

"Mostly though, I love to fish. I like to stream fish, if I had my druthers. California is probably the worst state in the country for fishing. I used to live in Wisconsin and there were streams all over the place. You could drive five minutes and be at a great fishing spot. Then you could hike up and down the stream two and three miles, falling over boulders, half drowning all the time. It was a great activity. Recently, I visited some buddies in Kansas and did some fishing. I like to fish for largemouth bass, but I can't eat all the fish I catch so mostly I throw them back. If people kept all the fish they caught—the legal limit—they could really mess up a stream ecologically. So I throw most of 'em back. There have been times when I caught the same fish twice or three times in the same day."

Have you thought about what you'd like to do when your football playing days are over?

"Yeah, I'd like to be an entrepreneur."

That's great, but you were a cum laude *graduate in economics at Notre Dame, and that's a pretty vague answer. What did your economics studies teach you that will help you later in life?*

"The best thing I learned in my economics classes was the word 'entrepreneur.' But seriously, I learned that economics was defined as 'the allocation of scarce goods.' Or something. No, what I'd really like to do is buy a resort, maybe a summer-type resort where people go to the middle of nowhere to fish. As far as taking a Monday-through-Friday-type job, I won't do that. I don't mind working, but I want to be doing different things. An entrepreneur just manages things. What I'm trying to say, I guess, is I'd like to be self-employed. If I save some money and make a few good investments, I shouldn't have to have a nine-to-five job. I should be able to manage what I already have set up. I'd hate, for example, to sell real estate or insurance; you know, sell the same insurance policy or same piece of real estate each day. I'd even be able to do some fishing while I was running the resort. I haven't decided to do that for sure yet, but whatever I do I want the work to be stimulating."

You're still young and you've got a lot of playing time left with the Oakland

Casper's main job is blocking; catching passes is a bonus, he says. But his 13-yard average last year was one of the best for a tight end.

Raiders. Are they a fun club to be with?

"I think we're one of the closer teams around. One reason, I guess, is there's so much talent on the club. I've heard people say the Raiders rise and fall on Stabler's arm and that's not all false. He's got one of the easiest balls to catch I've ever seen. He throws it just as hard as he has to to get it there, and not too soft to be intercepted."

Your touchdown catch in the Super Bowl was a thing of beauty. There was no one around you when you caught the ball.

"We had gotten down there deep earlier and we tried to make a couple of runs and they were just bringing everybody. So we decided, 'Let's just forget about running.' As soon as we showed them the play-action fake, the Minnesota cornerback came right into our backfield. He's supposed to sit back and read me and not come up so quick, and if he does that we're big and strong enough to run the ball in. So he just took a chance and I didn't bother to put on any moves. I just took off as quickly as I could, heading toward the corner. The pass was just right. I was nervous when I saw how high it was, but Kenny did a great job on the fake and on the pass."

Were you the primary receiver on the play?

"Yes, but I'm not that often. I'm usually the tertiary receiver. My pass patterns usually vary depending on how much time Kenny is getting. It's more logical to hit Cliff or Fred."

You're one of the Raiders best receivers but blocking is an important job, too. You've probably had some great personal duels. Who gives you the hardest time?

"Well, L. C. Greenwood is very active and very smart. And Fred Dean of the Chargers gives me trouble because he's small and quick. And Wilbur Young of the Chiefs is pretty big. He gives me a lot of headaches. But really, there aren't many guys in this league who crumble when you hit 'em. I mean, in the Super Bowl we had a lot of hard collisions; there wasn't much finesse. Jim Marshall was on my head the entire game and he was very aggressive. And the only thing to do in that case was be aggressive back."

But you had a very fine day blocking against one of the top defensive lines in the NFL.

"Yeah, I had a good day, but I paid for it, too."

Chuck Fairbanks

Head Coach, New England Patriots

Chuck Fairbanks knew he had a lot of changes to make after the 1975 season. His New England Patriots had won just three games, all before Thanksgiving. The last one, 33-19 over San Diego, came on November 8 and was followed by six consecutive defeats to close out a dreary year.

There were all sorts of extenuating circumstances, Fairbanks knew, but 3-11 is hard to explain to your owner, your fans, and yourself. So Fairbanks sat down and did some soul-searching. And some player searching. Where, he asked himself, could he get some top ball players? He came up with three answers, two of which were obvious: the draft and trades.

The third idea was the free agent market. Fairbanks decided he'd concentrate on this area with careful research and homework. It was here, he felt, that he could make some dramatic changes if he got lucky.

Meanwhile, Fairbanks made some modifications in his offensive system, solidified his defense, and made good use of the draft. In a major philosophical change, the Patriots traded quarterback Jim Plunkett to the San Francisco 49ers for a fleet of draft choices. This left Fairbanks with Steve Grogan, a run-oriented quarterback. Next Fairbanks drafted to fill needs in the defensive secondary. He picked Mike Haynes and Tim Fox on the first round. And he added so many free agents that in a list of the New England players one has to go back *two* seasons, not one, to find out where most of them played previously.

The result was a literal turnaround. Grogan set an NFL record for quarterbacks with 12 rushing touchdowns. New England made the playoffs with an 11-3 record, and only a couple of penalties in the playoff game against Oakland ended the team's Super Bowl hopes.

New England picked up quite a few free agents before last year began. How did you convince these people to return to football?

"If you look at our overall roster, we have worked pretty hard trying to sign free agent players. We have eighteen free agents on our roster. Many of them were put on waivers by other clubs, and some of them are pretty good players.

"To build a team, you must first start with the top players. The most likely place to get the special, star-type player is in the early rounds of the draft. So you build the top of your club there. And yet you also may be able to build at the bottom of your club, and improve the last player on your squad. And that's what we've tried to do with the building of this club: build it from the top and the bottom at the same time.

"Mike Patrick, our punter, and John Smith, our placekicker, are both free agents. Prentice McCray, our starting safety, is a free agent; Donnie Calhoun, who backs up Sam Cunningham, is a free agent. Albert Chandler, our number two tight end; Fred Sturt, a guard; Jim Romaniszyn, a linebacker; Dick Conn, a second-string safety—these are all players who have helped improve the *bottom* of our squad."

And in some areas the top of your squad, because some are starters and others see a lot of action. But how did you get so many free agents? What do you know that other clubs don't?

"Well, we worked especially hard in this area, because we knew that the club was down and needed a lot of help. We researched every player who was released by other clubs and we tried to pick those we thought had a chance to help our ball club.

"Sometimes players are unsuccessful with one club for many reasons. There are as many reasons as there are players, I guess. A good player may join a club and find the club is strong in the position he plays. For example, we got Leon Gray from Miami on waivers at a time when Miami was really going great. They were in the Super Bowl and they had veteran offensive tackles, so they released Leon. We claimed him and this year he played in the Pro Bowl."

Another thing that's meant a great deal to the Patriots was the draft. You've gotten some excellent players. For example, Haynes seemed an especially good choice in 1976.

"Yes, Mike had a great year for us last year. He's a talented guy. Another rookie, Timmy Fox, played free safety for us. The combination of adding those two talented guys to our secondary really helped us tremendously. That had been probably the weakest area of our ball club in 1975, so to get two players with ability was a great help to us. The other player we drafted in the first round was Pete Brock, a center and guard—or even a tackle—from the University of Colorado. We think Pete is an exceptional prospect. He didn't play a lot in his first year, but that was merely because we had more strength in our offensive line than we did in our defensive secondary. Haynes and Fox stepped in out of necessity. But Pete is equally as talented a football player at his position as the other two guys are at theirs."

Your starting offense is very young, though. It works out to an average of just over four years of NFL experience per man. When the 1976 season started did you think that inexperience might hurt you?

"We opened with Baltimore, Miami, Pittsburgh, and Oakland in our first four games, and I was concerned. I thought we had a chance to have a real good ball club, but I thought it would take them some time to put things together. And I was really worried because of the difficulty of that early season schedule that maybe we would lose confidence if we started out bad.

"But it happened just the opposite for us. We won three of those first four ball games and the players developed the confidence they could play against those clubs. So something I was really worried about turned out to be a plus for us instead."

Another thing that's made the Patriots a top team is the use of the three-four defense. It's not used that often in the NFL, and it seems to be employed only by those teams who feel they don't have four strong people up front. But the three-four has long been a staple in the college game. When you first came from Oklahoma, did you intend all along to go to the three-four?

"No, not really. The first year I was in pro ball, I was a rookie coach. I was kind of feeling my way and I guess I did many of the things that other people do. Our defensive structure was based on four down linemen, and we weren't very good at it. So I knew we had to do something to try to improve ourselves defensively. We had a shortage of quality defensive linemen but we had what I thought were some pretty good young linebacker prospects. But they didn't have the experience that four-down line defenses require. But they had had

Chuck Fairbanks is a master of defense, but he's alert to offensive plans, too.

"I'm not a big gambler. I don't approach football that way. But I'm not opposed to gambling if I think some percentages are on my side."

Fairbanks, still wearing the national championship watch he won at Oklahoma, relates well to his

experience in college playing similar defenses to the three-four, which is sometimes called the stack defense. So we decided that that particular defense fit our personnel."

Wasn't the three-four a remedy of sorts for the Oakland Raiders in 1976?

"It helped them very much. They had a shortage of linemen. They got some defensive linemen hurt early in training camp. Three of them were starters. And yet they had strength at the linebacker position. I thought John Madden did a great job of adjusting to the new system to fit the personnel he had available. And I think that's one of the keys to coaching. You have to try to look at the talent you have available and make the kinds of adjustments that best utilize those talents."

You were the only team to beat Oakland last year (48-17). Did the score have anything to do with the fact that the Raiders were using the three-four for the first time and you knew how to attack it?

"We moved the ball especially well on offense in that particular game, which was one factor. And the other factor was that defensively we had a very good game defending against their wide receivers, which is a very tough thing to do against Branch and Biletnikoff. They're two of the premier receivers in the league. In that game they had only one completion between them. Also, Oakland was just in the beginning stages of using the three-four defense. They were just getting into it and they weren't as nearly well coordinated at that time as they were later on, after both their staff and their players became more acquainted with it."

You ran the ball particularly well last season, with three people gaining 700 or more yards on the ground. Do you expect that the running game is where New England's future lies in 1977?

"I'm a strong advocate of the running game. I think you have to do *everything* well to win in this league. The league is so competitive and well balanced that you can't have many weaknesses. You can't be overbalanced in any particular area. But if you study and research the successful teams in this league, you'll find that in a high percentage of the cases they've had a real ability to control the running game, both ways, offensively and defensively."

Grogan seems to fit into your plans very well because of his running ability. But his passing completion percentage was under 50 percent. Does that bother you?

"I think that's a misleading statistic because we ran the ball so much last year and we did it so well that a lot of our passing came in situations where we were at a disadvantage. We were passing in passing situations more than I hope to do in the future."

Does that mean we'll see a gambling Chuck Fairbanks this season?

"No, I'm not a big gambler. I don't approach football that way. I have a tendency to play a sound and solid game. But I'm not opposed to gambling if I think some percentages are on my side. I do think we can do more passing on running downs and pick the spots in our passing a little bit better."

Have you ever thought about using the wishbone, either as a regular offensive idea or as a spot offense?

"I thought about it a couple of years ago when I had Jack Mildren on our squad. Jack was really trained in the offense and we did practice it some. We were prepared to use it in short-yardage situations. But that

players, the way he did in college. Here he chats on the side lines with offensive tackle Leon Gray.

particular year we were playing offense pretty well with Jim Plunkett directing the team. We scored three-hundred forty-six points that year and I didn't want to upset the things we were doing. It's really not the kind of offense you can use on a part-time basis. It takes a lot of practice and repetition to execute it properly. We don't have enough practice time in the day to work on it to use in spot situations. And if you don't run that offense properly, it's one of the worst looking offenses in football."

Is there anything we can look for in the 1977 Patriots that we didn't see in 1976?

"I wish I could see into the future. Oftentimes the things that characterize a ball club are spontaneous things. We don't always know for sure what causes them to happen. If coaches had the answers to those things, they could bottle it and sell it."

What about the passing game? Can we expect to see Grogan throwing more?

"I don't know about that. I'm not as interested in how many we throw but what kind of production we get when we do throw. I hope our ball club will continue to be a very strong running team and that we can increase our pass completion percentage and reduce the interceptions. Hopefully, we can come up with more yards per completion, or per attempt. And maybe we can get a few more big plays than we did last year."

Winning 11 games was a great achievement, but the loss to the Raiders in the playoffs must have hurt a lot. Did the players take the loss hard?

"Oh, I only noticed about forty-three of 'em taking it hard. We all had worked very hard for that game and we played well. We were really disappointed to lose the way we did."

Tommy Hart

Defensive end, San Francisco 49ers

It's a quiet street, not the main street of Menlo Park. Cars park diagonally; kids skip by bouncing basketballs; traffic is light.

A half dozen bikes are parked in front of Tom Hart's Sporting Goods. Inside, the 6-foot 2-inch, 240-pound shopowner, speaking softly, waits on the patrons, most of whom are roughly half his height and one-third his weight.

Away from the thunderous collisions of a defensive end on Sundays, this sporting goods store is the other side of Tommy Hart, the bruising, jarring quarterback sacker of the San Francisco 49ers. It's to be his post-football security, and now it shows better than almost anything how diverse a man Tommy Hart is.

You might expect this behemoth to fill the store with his presence and booming voice. Instead he simply offers assistance from behind the counter, lets customers look around, and speaks softly when waiting on them. He opens early and stays until it's time to head for training camp for a weightlifting session, or home for dinner.

Some neighborhood youngsters work in the store with him. The place is spotless, orderly. NFL posters dot the walls. Carpeting keeps the place quieter still.

The 49ers' defense recorded 61 sacks last year, tops in the NFL and only six fewer than the all-time single-season record set by the 1967 Raiders. Hart had 16 sacks, no shock since he has averaged 16 sacks per year for the last five seasons.

Amazingly, Tommy wasn't even a defensive end when the 49ers drafted him in 1968.

"At Morris Brown, where I went to school, I didn't have an idol. I just wanted to get a good education and then go out and get a job. But in my senior year I thought I'd really like to play pro football. But I was drafted in the tenth round, and when you get to the tenth round and on down, you're like a free agent, more or less."

You were drafted as a linebacker, but the coaches said you were too aggressive to play that spot. Were you concerned you might not stay with the club?

"Yes. I played some linebacker, and then they tried me at tight end and offensive guard, and I played some on the special teams. I thought I could play tight end. I didn't have the greatest hands in the world, but I thought my blocking ability could be great for some team. I can catch the ball some, and I think if they needed somebody now, at a moment's notice, I could step in and do a job."

Still, you were not very big that first season with the 49ers. How did you change that?

"I started lifting weights at the training camp. It's just five minutes from where I live, so I lifted weights just about every day. The facilities at camp are open six days a week year 'round, so I did a lot of weightlifting and running."

You came into camp as a 210-pound rookie. Now you weigh 240 and still have pretty good speed.

"Yeah, I was timed in four-seven for the forty last year. But I think endurance is more important than speed."

The 49ers were much improved defensively last year over the year before.

"Jimmy Webb and Cleveland Elam were major reasons. In the past we weren't getting much pressure from the tackles, inside. Last year, with Cedrick [Hardman] on the outside and Jimmy and Cleveland inside, they just gave the pressure and I came around and made a lot ot quarterback sacks."

Were the 49ers doing anything different strategically on defense in 1976?

"The year before, we stayed in a flex defense, where one end is starting off the ball. And that kind of slowed down the pass rush. The only time we got a good pass rush was in passing situations. Oh, it was a great running defense, but I think it hurt the pass rush. Last year, under Monte Clark, we could get down and go. We got off the ball, and the linebackers were told to pick up the slack. In this league now, you've got to have such great instinct, so that if you're rushing the quarterback and the play turns out to be a run, you can make the adjustment."

The 49ers were 8-6 last year. You won twice as many games as in 1975 and at one time you were 6-1 and looked as if you'd make the playoffs. How did you feel when the season ended?

"I felt good about the entire season, if you don't look at the wins and losses. But overall, I wasn't satisfied. I think in St. Louis we had a lapse defensively in the overtime. And they took the ball and drove downfield on us. In the latter part of the year we played the Chargers and in overtime, again, they took the ball down and scored. It was those things. When we had to have it, we didn't have it. To be a great defense, you can't let those sort of things happen. You've gotta be able to go out there and stop a ball club when you have to."

In the last year or so, officials have been calling offensive holding more. I'm sure you've heard it said that they could probably call holding on every play if they wanted to.

"That's right. One time, when we were playing the Rams, this guy [John] Williams ripped my jersey right off me. And they didn't call a penalty. So, yes, on every play there is holding going on somewhere on the offensive line."

But with more penalties being called, the result has been more double-teaming on the stars such as yourself.

"Yeah, a lot of times you can beat that tackle off the ball but then they have the running backs pick you up. When you're double-teamed like that, it's dangerous, because you could get hit from the side by the tackle, and it's easy to get injured."

Sometimes it looks as if you're having a personal fight out there with the tackles.

"Yes, it does. But it depends. Some tackles in the league can do a lot more things to you. Like Ron Yary of Minnesota, Rayfield Wright of the Dallas Cowboys, Dan Dierdorf of St. Louis. Those are the things the premier tackles in the league can do. Those are guys who can beat you almost any way they want to. Those are guys you always have a hard time against. They use their hands well; they set up well. No matter what you do, you always seem to come out second best. I think Dierdorf is one of the best offensive tackles in the league, and maybe he doesn't get all the credit he should. He doesn't do anything illegal. It's just the way he plays. I've watched him on films before I've played him, trying to figure out a way to beat him. But I always seem to have problems with him."

How does a defensive lineman get the upper hand over an offensive lineman?

"One thing is to force them to do different things. Say one guy is supposed to block you. Sometimes I'll move out of the way and

Tommy Hart is a shy person, with sensitive eyes and a quiet manner about him.

Hart didn't start out a star. But a rugged weight training program made him extremely strong, as Atlanta's Kim McQuilken found out.

let the guard take him. It's just a switch, but a lot of times that fouls up the offensive blocking.

"And besides, I would never go an entire game against Ron Yary. Why should the 49ers put their ace against Minnesota's ace one-on-one all day? That would just be a stalemate, so you try to play some games to foul up their blocking.

The New England Patriots, Oakland Raiders, and Houston Oilers were teams that used the three-four defense last year. Some people consider that a radical change from the four-three that has been used mostly in recent years. If you had your choice, which defense would you prefer to play?

"I'd play the four-three, just the way we did last year. Especially from a defensive lineman's standpoint. In the three-four, there's more pressure on the defensive linemen, where the linebacker is free to roam all over the place. Actually, there's not that much difference between the three-four and the four-three. In the three-four you're shooting a linebacker most of the time and it's the job of the offense to pick up the linebacker who's coming. The three-

"I would never go an entire game against Ron Yary. Why should the 49ers put their ace against Minnesota's ace one-on-one all day?"

four works lots of times because the offense doesn't pick up the linebacker who's rushing."

In the three-four, the linebacker has a few extra tenths of a second to think, to decide what move he's going to make. But the linemen have to make that decision almost instantaneously.

"Right. But in the three-four, most of that is all predetermined. We have a three-four in our system. Say we get a team down thirty-five to nothing and you know the other team is going to pass, so we go to a three-man line. In our theory of the prevent defense, the draw play is left up to the linebackers."

You've stayed in great shape over the years. How do you do it?

"Lifting weights at least three times a week, jogging, and just staying in shape. What I try to do is stay in top condition all year round. I go into the season in the best condition I can be in."

You've been fortunate in avoiding major injuries. How do you do it?

"I'm always moving. And I stay away from injuries. If I'm in a game and I get my leg pinned, I never try to fight the pressure, because a lot of times if you try to fight it, you'll get injured."

I'm sure you saw Oakland's Jack Tatum hit Minnesota's Sammy White in the third quarter of the Super Bowl. It was an incredibly hard tackle. How do you feel about this kind of play?

"It was a great catch by Sammy, just to hold onto the ball. But it was Tatum's job to separate him from the ball, jar the ball loose if he possibly could. But what I can't see is when a receiver comes down field and he doesn't have the ball and all of a sudden some guy comes along and pops him. I think the bump and run should be outlawed completely. And even at the line of scrimmage, I think holding up a receiver there should be outlawed, too. Let those receivers just go where they want to go."

This sporting goods store is a major part of your life these days, isn't it?

"Yes, I spend a lot of time here. It's near training camp. I opened it about a year ago. It would have been on the main drag, but rents are so high. And there's so much competition in the business these days—so many shoe companies to buy from—I decided to start slowly. I've decided to keep my shoes at a moderate price, to try to give great service, and to be honest with people. I want to move slowly. So many sporting goods businesses have been started by ball players and because of one thing or another they completely went under. Eventually I'd like to open a store in Macon, Georgia, my home town. I've got a cattle ranch there now. It's run by my brothers and my father. I had a tough year last winter. Lost a lot of cows because of the weather."

When your career is over, do you plan to move back to Macon or remain in the Bay Area?

"I like this area, so I think I'll stay here. In the offseason I work in the juvenile hall system, with problem kids. It's called the Youth Guidance Center. It's about twenty-five miles from here. I've done it for the last five years, and it's really rewarding work. You see so many kids who are going the wrong way. You get to talk to them and lots of times they listen. If I get just two kids out of a hundred to go straight, if you help just two, you've done a big thing."

You're quite busy then.

"Yeah, I spend six days a week in the store, I work out, and I work at the juvenile hall."

How long do you think you'll play pro football?

"I've been in the league nine years, and I feel very fortunate. I didn't start out as a star and it was hard work. And I've heard that the average life of a ball player in the NFL is four and a half years. I'd like to play twelve years, but when I get to a point where I feel I can't do the job any more, I do want to move out. Merlin Olsen was great all his years in the league, but I've seen other ball players hang around when they should have given up a long time ago. I don't want to get to that point. I want to stay in shape year-round, stay at a level where I'm satisfied with my play. That's why I started this sporting goods business now. I've seen ball players play and play, and get cut, and go from one ball club to another, looking for that one great season, where they could stay around just to make enough money to start a business outside of football. But then there are guys who I really admire, like Len Rhode. He played ball quite a few years for the 49ers, but then he got to a point where he could leave football and not miss the financial benefits of it. I'm trying to do the same thing. Also, I have other real estate interests here, and my wife and three daughters like it here."

The sign over your store says "Tom Hart Sporting Goods." But we've been calling you Tommy. Which do you prefer?

"Oh, I don't mind either. The reason I have Tom on the sign is that there's no room for Tommy."

Bert Jones

Quarterback, Baltimore Colts

Bert Jones comes from a football background. He was a water boy for the Cleveland Browns when his father, Dub, was a star halfback; he was an All-America quarterback at Louisiana State.

He's unconcerned about his status as perhaps the fastest-rising quarterback in the game. He lived with his parents for years, and he still lives in Ruston, the Louisiana town where he grew up.

So why did Bert Jones become embroiled in the Baltimore Colts' management squabble of a year ago? Why did he step in and raise his voice when Baltimore coach Ted Marchibroda told management he no longer wanted to be the Colts' field boss?

The reasons are simple. Bert Jones is an honest, sincere sort of superstar. He says what he thinks—about people he likes and doesn't like, about himself.

You would think that Bert Jones would be a rustic type, perhaps even a little naive. You would think wrong. Jones is a jet-set sort of Renaissance Man who flies his own plane, hunts and fishes, skis, enjoys scuba diving and spear fishing, and can be considered a budding land baron.

However, if this unique athlete has one overriding characteristic it's that despite the incredible variety in his life he's basically the same as he always has been, unaffected by the fame and adulation and not at all attracted to the bright lights and tinsel of the big cities.

You were instrumental in getting Marchibroda to stay with the Colts at the start of last year. What was the problem between him and management and why did you feel you had to get involved?

"I think there are three components to a ball club—management, personnel, and coaching—and I think all three components are very important. Management here had a tendency to de-emphasize the coaching aspect of the game and there was a lot of turmoil because of it. That can't happen if you're going to have a winning team. Coaching is very important in the making of a ball club. And we just didn't feel we needed to have our season ruined at that point in time. I mean, we had a great season the year before."

Did management get upset because the Colts were unimpressive in the 1976 preseason?

"Ball players know that the preseason is just the preseason. You don't show all the things you do in the regular season. But there was some interference from people in authority. The general manager and the coach were not working in a cohesive manner."

You have a close personal relationship with coach Marchibroda, right?

"Well, we do work closely together. I call one hundred percent of my own signals and we spend a lot of time mapping out our game plan. I'd venture to say that we spend as much time as anybody—if not more time—working out what we plan on doing for each game."

Why do you think so many coaches like calling plays from the side line?

"I don't know. Different theories for different people. Of course, I think the quarterback should call the plays and I'm very thankful that Ted feels the same way. But I guess some people think a quarterback can't get as prepared as a coach can, and therefore the coach calls the plays. But sometimes the quarterback doesn't know what the coach is thinking when he sends in the plays. For example, a coach might call '72 whirl' and nobody knows why he called it, because there are five receivers and the quarterback might not know which receiver the coach wants to throw to."

Does seeing the defense from the backfield on each play give you an advantage over the coach?

"I think so. First of all, I think you need to understand that in calling my plays all I'm doing is relaying in my own mind what I have decided on and what the coach and I had discussed for this particular situation. Me calling the plays doesn't mean Ted doesn't know what I'm calling because we spend hours upon hours working on play calling—what we should do in this situation, the probability of what we think they're gonna do in a particular situation, every option. With the exception of a few running plays, I'm sure Ted knows what I'm calling right along.

"As long as we can think the same and still remain independent. It's not totally programmed thinking, but yet we do tend to think alike and I think that's an asset."

You seem to have a great understanding of the individual talents of the other members of the offensive team, such as Lydell Mitchell and Roger Carr. In fact, the emergence of Carr as a long-distance threat was the major difference in your passing yardage between 1975 and 1976.

"I would imagine so. Roger caught a little over a thousand yards in pass receptions last year and the year before it wasn't anything like that. He really came on strong last year and was a real asset to the ball club. I think he helped the ball club as much as anybody."

Have you ever thrown to anybody with that much speed?

"No, not really. Roger has a really fine explosiveness to the ball, something you don't find too often. He's a fast runner, but he also has this quick burst of speed to get to the ball that a lot of people don't have. And because of that he gets to the ball a little better than other people."

Does that mean you tend to lead him a bit more than other receivers?

"Well, that's kind of an oversimplification, but in essence what you're saying is pretty close to right. I think what it really is is that Roger has the ability to get open and as long as I can hit him, he can catch the ball."

What one thing pleased you most about the play of the Colts last year?

"I would say it might have been the play of the offensive line. Their play was just great. If we needed yards on the ground, they got it. Or if I needed time to throw, I got it. The offensive line allows us to do what we need to do, whether it's a run or a pass."

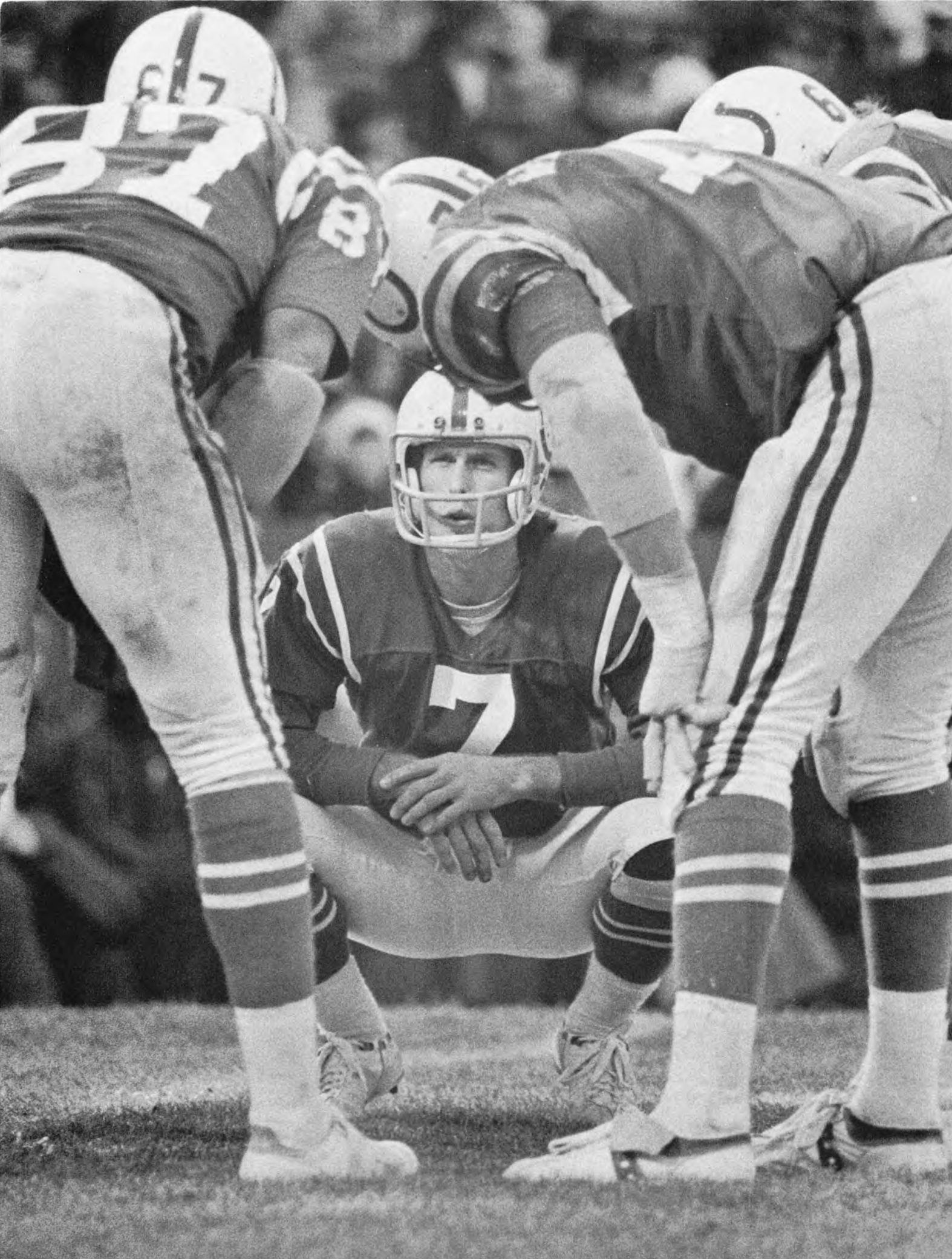
Your father was a record-setting halfback at Cleveland. How much did he help you develop your quarterback skills?

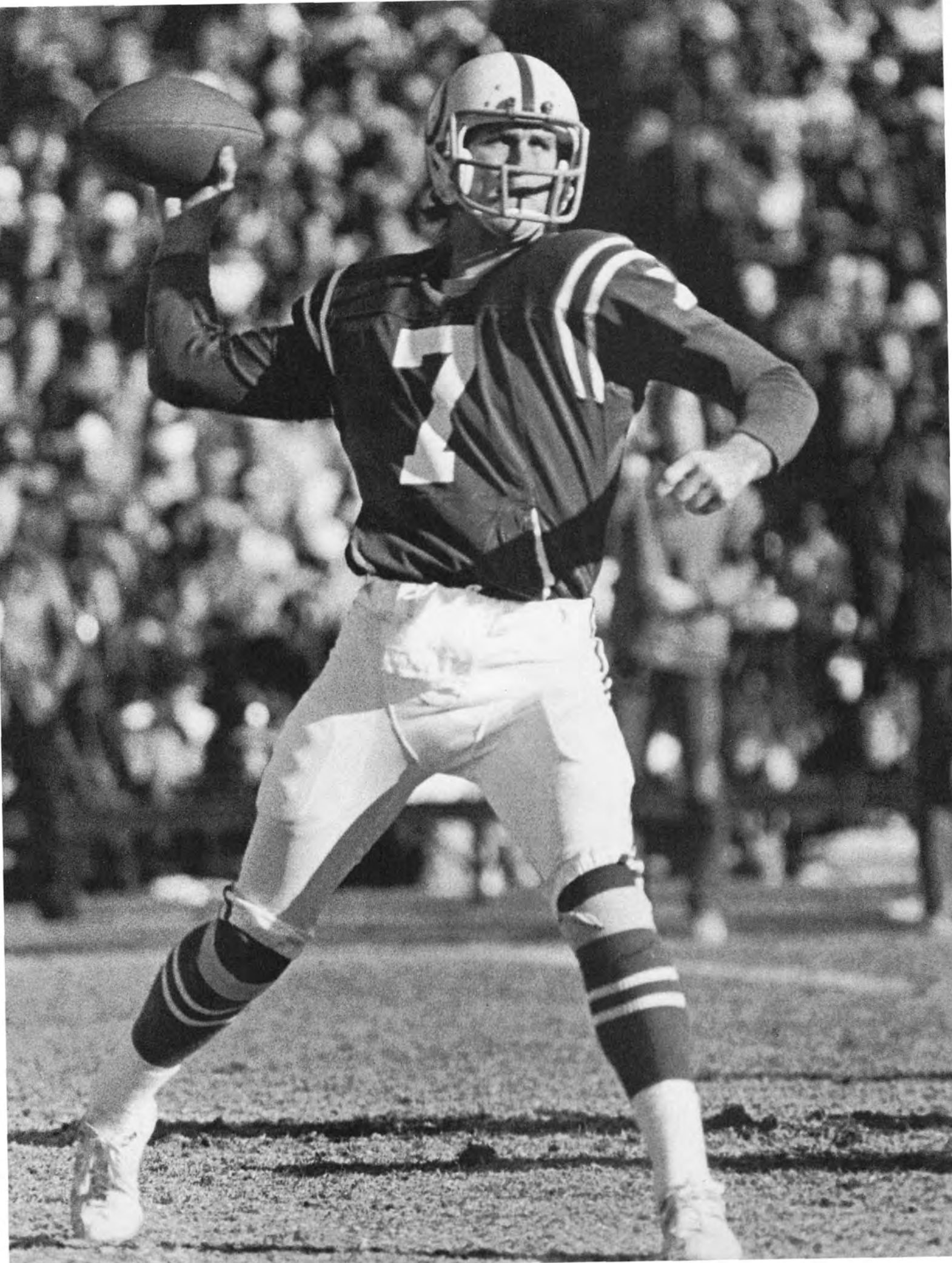
"I'd have to say he was very instrumental. He was the number one influence, but he didn't force me into the game. He's proud that I'm a football player, but really it didn't make any difference, one way or the other. But once I had established my ideas of what I wanted to do, he made sure that I did it to the best of my ability. He never pushed me, but he was always there to catch if I wanted somebody to throw to."

Did he help you to develop your passing style?

"My dad believes that throwing is a very natural motion and he never ever has sat down and coached it. But I guess that's his coaching technique—saying that throwing is natural and should not be interfered with. And because of that—plus his confidence

When the Colts huddle, they don't look to the side lines for the play; they look to Bert.





"Me calling the plays doesn't mean Ted doesn't know what I'm calling, because we spend hours upon hours working on play calling—what we should do."

in me—he helped me."

You assist your father in his hardware and construction company business, don't you?

"Kind of. I own my own plane, a Beechcraft Baron. It's a twin-engine plane and, being a football player, I'm asked to be all over the place, so it helps me a lot. One night I might be speaking at a dinner; the next night I might be at a charity function. And we use the plane in conjunction with my father's lumber business here in Ruston. He also has business interests in south Louisiana.

"And I like to take the plane on vacations. I'm a real outdoor type. For the last five or six years I've been scuba diving a lot. From the Florida Keys to Central America, British Honduras, and the Caribbean. I guess the most relaxing thing I do is fish. I do lots of fishing and hunting. I'm predominantly a fresh-water fisherman, because when I'm in salt water I'm usually diving and spear fishing.

"Also, I ski a lot. We used to own a restaurant in Aspen, and I'd go there to ski."

You were the only quarterback in football last year to pass for more than 3,000 yards. How much will the Colts pass this year?

"It's really hard to say. We'll take what the other teams give us, really. We'll attack their weaknesses, whether it's run or pass. If we feel they've taken away our passing to the point where our running game is that much better, then that's what we'll do. Lydell Mitchell was one of the top ground gainers in the league last year. So we can run *or* pass. Whatever it takes to win."

Lydell had 1,200 yards rushing and he also led your team in receptions with 60. It was a remarkable year.

"I don't think there's any doubt he's a very talented individual. The record speaks for itself. He runs for a lot of yards and he catches a lot of footballs for a lot of yards. And he's very valuable on those downs when you have to get a first down."

You were a first-round draft choice in 1973 and came into the league with a great reputation, but you had an uneventful rookie season.

"Our team was very young and immature and didn't have the personnel we have today. Because of it we just didn't put anything

Bert's passing form has been called "classic" and "out of a textbook."

Father Dub helped Bert's football career. Now Bert helps dad in the lumber business.

together. When you have a bad team, it's harder to play well. We were always losing, and we always had to throw the ball. I felt like we were kind of thrown to the dogs, in a sense. But I enjoyed it, and I wished I could have played more than I did."

What was the one major thing that you noticed in your own development that was the most dramatic?

"I don't think there was any one particular thing. We had a coaching change after my first year, and in my second year, too, so I just think establishing the stability in the team helped me out, too. And developing my own confidence, and Ted's confidence in me. It was just a matter of getting things worked out so they worked."

Last year you threw only nine interceptions and went four games in a row toward the end of the season without an interception. In fact, in your last six games you threw just one. Is there any advice you could give youngsters on how not to throw interceptions?

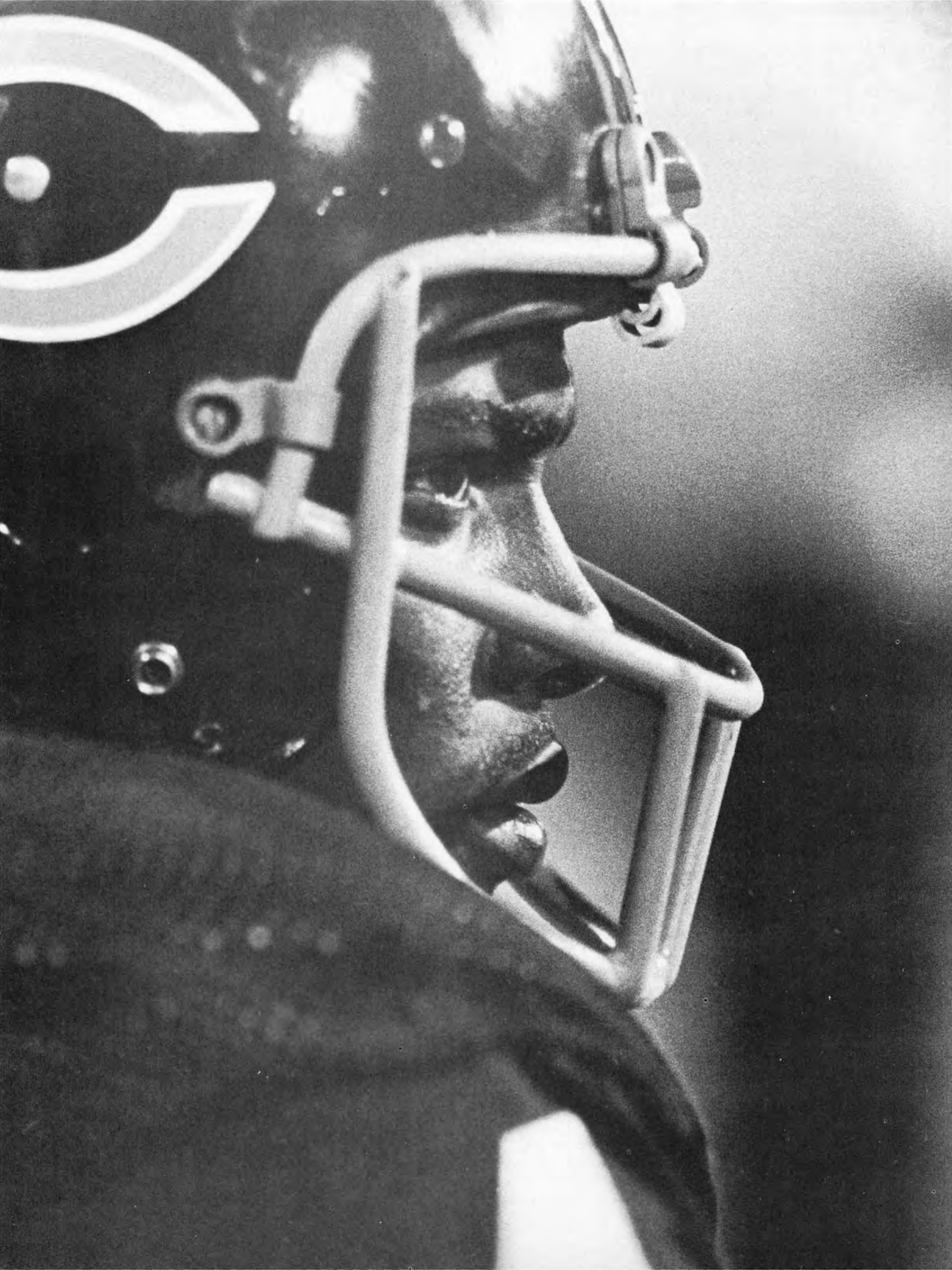
"Yeah, throw to your people and not their's. Seriously, there are a lot of variables that go into that. You have to be somewhat accurate, so you try not to throw many bad passes. And the other thing is you have to know who to go to at the right time. Interceptions are mainly caused by people throwing into the wrong coverage. It may not have been a bad throw, but it's a bad pass in that it's being thrown to the wrong place at the wrong time."

You got married this year.

"Danni and I—her name was Danni Dupuis and we met at LSU—were married on March 26 and we're living in Ruston."

You must really love Ruston.

"Yeah. I love the outdoors and I love this town and the people. I've been asked why I don't move to Baltimore. But you have to see Ruston to understand why I like living here."



Walter Payton

Running back, Chicago Bears

Chicago's Walter Payton was the most productive running back in the National Football Conference in 1976; in the NFL, only Buffalo's O.J. Simpson totaled more rushing yards.

Payton amassed 1,390 yards in his sophomore season in pro football. But Walter always has been a high roller in the numbers game of running statistics.

Consider his college credentials at Jackson State, for example: 3,563 yards rushing, 66 touchdowns scored, 27 pass receptions for 474 yards, and a 43.0 average on kickoff returns. He also completed 14 passes in 19 attempts, kicked five field goals and 53 extra points, and punted for a 39-yard average per kick.

Injuries struck early and often in Walter's rookie season in the NFL in 1975, however. The result was a relatively disappointing 679 yards rushing, an average of only 3.5 yards per carry. Payton averaged 31.7 yards on kickoff returns.

Last season, Payton rocketed to the front pages when he grabbed the rushing lead early in the season. Only an incredibly fast finish by Simpson cost Payton the NFL rushing title.

The sort of season Payton had might prompt any ordinary back to envision playing pro football a long time.

Have you thought about how long you'll play pro ball?

"Three more years."

Is that definite?

"Yep."

But why just three more seasons when you've only begun to show your great potential?

"I'll be stretching it a little bit even then. All the experts say the life expectancy of an NFL running back is about five years, and if I play three more years after this one, that'll be six years."

But O.J. Simpson won the rushing title last year in his eighth year. Isn't there a possibility you might stay around beyond six?

"Oh, I guess it's not all that definite. I had set three more years as a goal. If I surpass that . . . well, it'll be nice. But I do want to make use of my master's degree."

What's your major?

"I graduated from Jackson State with a degree in special education with an empahsis on audiology, and that's what I'm working on my master's in right now."

Audiology is the science of hearing and solving the problems of people with hearing loss. Are you doing any of that sort of work now?

"Right now I work in Junior Achievement programs and with a lot of other organizations geared to develop young kids, the underprivileged, and those who might not have an opportunity to be exposed to certain aspects of life."

Breaking into the NFL must have been a traumatic experience for you. You suffered a rather serious right elbow injury in the All Star camp and had to be hospitalized. Then, in your first game with the Bears, you carried the ball eight times and gained no yards.

"Coming out of college into the professional ranks was a very hard adjustment. It would be hard for any guy. It's hard enough for someone who's one hundred percent physically, but when you come out and have a setback right away . . . well, that makes it just so much rougher."

In your fourth game you suffered an ankle injury and you rushed 10 times for no yards. Did that upset you?

"It did, because I still had to try and go out and play with pain. That was a big adjustment—to cope with both my own pain and the expertise on the other teams, too."

Did you ever, during those first few games, think you might have gotten into the wrong field?

"That thought never crossed my mind because I'm never one to say, 'I quit' or 'I give up.' I knew things had to get better because they couldn't get any worse."

What was the biggest adjustment you had to make in pro ball?

"I think the biggest adjustment for any guy is to realize that besides being a sport, football is a business. In college you didn't get paid for it. You got the hurrahs and a pat on the back. Here you're working, and your performance relates to whether or not you eat."

How would you describe your style of running?

"People used to say I ran with an outlaw style—you know, reckless, with abandon. But I don't think it's that way. Believe it or not, every move I make out there is precision. It's been thought out many times and I practice all the time.

"If I had to give some advice to guys coming up, I'd tell them, 'Don't do what I do. Don't try to emulate me.' Because what I do takes a lot of work. I mean a *lot* of work. I practice different moves and different cuts and a lot of times I fall down trying to perfect them. I don't just say, 'Well, I'm going out there and do it.'

"Some of the ability is there, of course, but you gotta work. Sometimes I'll try something that I've never tried before and if it works I'll ask myself, 'Now, how did I do that?' and I'll retrace my steps and keep trying it until I have to sit down, I'm so tired."

So for you staying in shape is more complicated than simple exercises and straight-ahead running?

"Right. We've got some hills down here—the Mississippi Hills and Tennessee Hills. I get some guys from Jackson State and we run these hills. We do stretching exercises and then we zig-zag our way up those hills. Some of them are almost straight up."

That means you're using more muscles than you'd use in a normal workout, right?

"That's right. A lot of people, including backs, are guilty of going into a weight room and just working on certain areas that they want to build up. The way I train you work every part of your body."

There have been reports that the Bears' coaches want your quarterbacks to throw to you more this season. Have you heard this?

"We went through a little orientation camp in April and we heard about some changes they were planning. Throwing to me more was one of them."

Of course, pass receiving will give you the ball in the open field more, and you have a great ability to run in the open field.

"I enjoyed running back kickoffs because of the open-field running I could do. But I don't want to make a habit of it."

You completed 14 of 19 passes in college. Do you plan to do any throwing this year?

"Well, I think they may ask me to do some this year, because they sent out 'must do' sheets to some of the players—things they have to work on before camp opens—and they asked me to work on my passing. So that's an indication anyway."

You got some great blocking last year. Could you pick out any one lineman who blocked especially well last year?

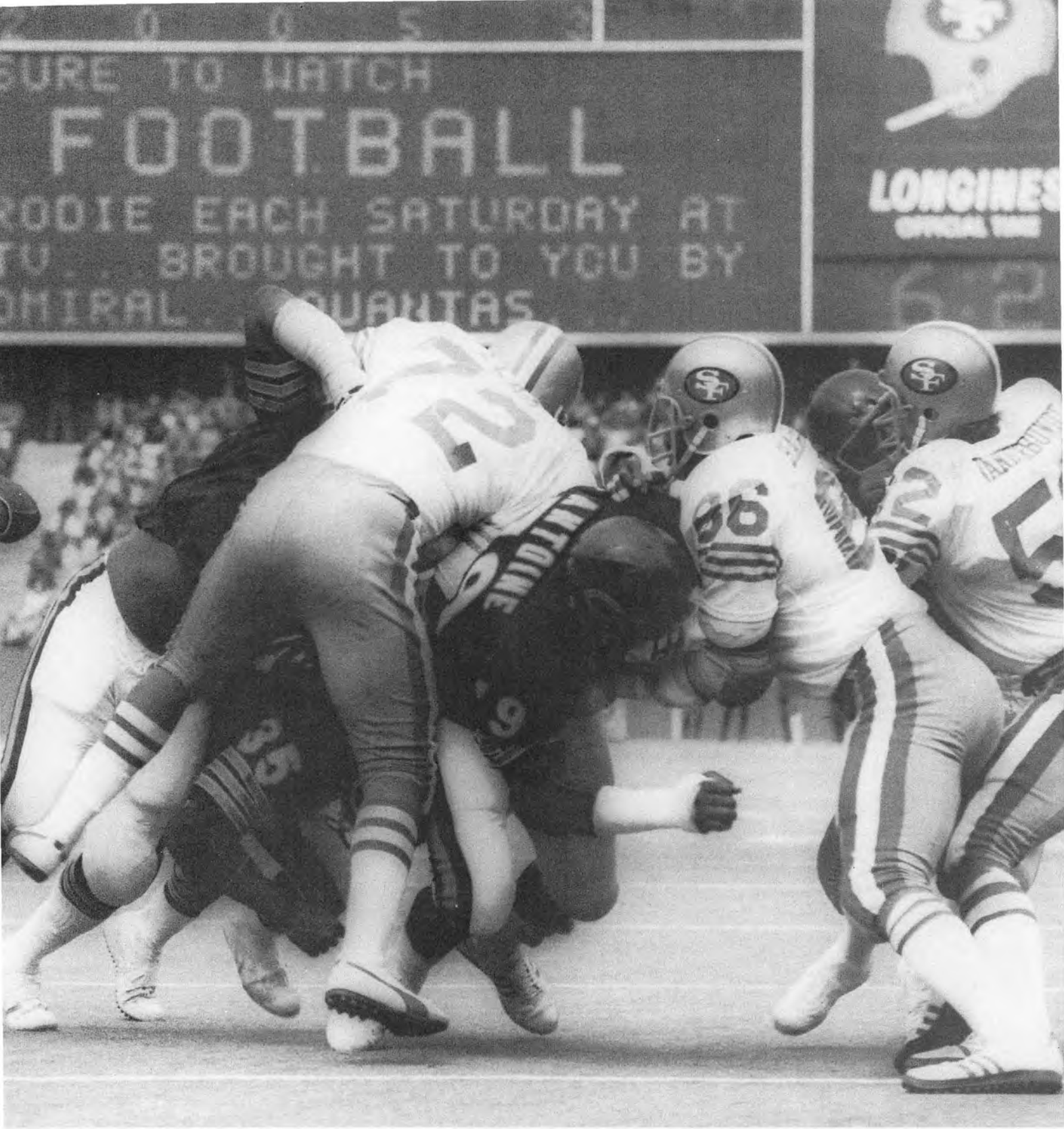
Walter Payton is working on his master's degree; he says he'll have a short pro career.

After opening 1976 with a 70-yard day in a victory over Detroit, Payton showed a glimmer of what was to come, running for 148 yards and two

"Believe me, I can't pick out just one. On every snap of the ball, every one of those guys was firing off the ball and doing a job to help me gain yardage. But if I had to pick out one guy who really helped me I'd have to say Roland Harper. He's in the backfield with me and I'm watching him more. But I couldn't pick out any of the linemen. They all did a super job."

Late in the season you had a chance to win the rushing title. But in your final game against Denver you sprained an ankle and as they took you off the field you were crying. Did it mean that much to you?

"I was thinking about it. But really, I was more disappointed about losing that game. At one stage in the season, the offensive linemen seemed to be working *too* hard, if you know what I mean. It looked as if they wanted me to win the rushing title so badly that they were doing things out of the ordinary—like being overly aggressive. And that's not productive. I felt badly about it. So I asked the coaches to take me out . . . to put in Roland or Mike [Adamle] or someone else. The linemen wanted to win it so badly they were doing things they normally



touchdowns against a defense-minded 49ers' team. Here he scored behind great blocking from seven yards out.

wouldn't do. I wanted to win the game more than anything.''

You're listed at 211 pounds. Is that your playing weight?

''Well, they say I weigh 211, but I don't think I've ever weighed 211. By the time of the third preseason game, I should be down to about 204, which is my playing weight. I lift weights at home, but not a lot. I just stay trim by doing lots of running and some isometrics.''

Your nickname is ''Sweetness.'' How did you get it?

''When I was coming out of college I had a chance to play in some postseason games, and when we were warming up I'd make some moves and cuts, and the guys on the field would yell, ''How sweet it is!' And in the hotel lobbies, they'd say, 'Hello, sweetness.' So it kind of stuck.''

Do you have any personal goals?

''I've always had pesonal goals, but they're only in me. If anybody knew about them, they wouldn't be personal any more. I'm just one of those guys who's never satisfied. I wasn't even satisfied with what I did in college. If I ever get satisfied with a perfor-

"If I had to give some advice to guys coming up, I'd tell them, 'Don't do what I do. Don't emulate me.' Because what I do takes lots of work."

His style has been called "outlaw" and reckless, but everything is planned.

mance or a game, then it's time to get out. I always try to get better than I did in my previous game."

You're involved in a great many non-football activities. Tell us some of them.

"I'm into music. I play drums. In high school I played in the concert band for six years. I hope to play with a group, but I'm so busy these days I haven't even had time to look for one to play with.

"Also, I love to travel. I'm an outdoor type of person. I love to hunt and fish. I got a little fishing in some time ago and I did pretty well, but I still have one dream, something I've always wanted to do: catch a six-pound bass. I've always dreamed about catching one.

"And right now I'm playing a lot of golf."

What do you shoot?

"Oh, in the low 200s. No, seriously, I went out the other day and for the first six holes I was one over par and then I parred the last three holes. My score was thirty-six for nine holes. I played in the pro-am portion of the Magnolia Classic in Mississippi last year and in Houston this year."

Obviously you're quite busy. Is there anything else?

"Well, I suppose you could say something about my religious background. During the season we have a vesper service that some of the players attend. And in the off-season I go to church every Sunday here in Jackson. There are about thirty-five churches in the Jackson area. I'm a Baptist but I try to go to all of them. It's hard because there aren't that many Sundays in the off-season, but I try to attend every church."

Your brother is going to give pro football a try this year.

"Yes, his name is Edward and he was signed by the Cleveland Browns. He has been coaching at Jackson State."

Do you still live in Jackson in the off-season?

"Yes, I'm a sports commentator on television here. But I'm very happy to be with the Chicago Bears' organization, so after next season I plan to move to Chicago in the offseason. After I get my master's degree, I'd like to see what lanes open up to me in the audiology field. I'm very happy to be in such a great city such as Chicago, with all those great fans. The people have just been beautiful to me and my wife, Connie."

1976 Review

The exciting 1976 season in the NFL

Week 1

The First Week, September 12, 1976

▶ *Skip Thomas broke up this Terry Bradshaw pass to Lynn Swann (88), but later George Atkinson's forearm smash to the back of Swann's helmet left the wide receiver with a concussion. He wound up catching just two passes and failed to return to the game.*

People

Coy Bacon
Cincinnati
The Bengals traded Charlie Joiner to San Diego in the off-season for Bacon in hopes of improving their pass rush. Bacon provided an initial return on the investment by sacking Denver quarterback Steve Ramsey three times for losses of 27 yards.

Don Goode
San Diego
After two seasons in the NFL, linebacker Goode still was looking for his first interception. He picked off two of Kansas City quarterback Mike Livingston's passes as the Chargers defeated the Chiefs and won on opening day for the first time since 1971.

Monte Jackson
Los Angeles
The Rams' young secondary is considered one of the best in the NFL. Second-year man Jackson, who came on strongly in the second half of his rookie season in 1975, intercepted two passes, running 46 yards with the second to score.

Sam McCullum
Seattle
McCullum was a seldom-used receiver before Seattle chose him from Minnesota in the expansion draft. Now a starter, McCullum responded by scoring the Seahawks' first touchdown in history and caught 4 passes for 112 yards and two touchdowns.

Bob Pollard
New Orleans
The Saints' opening loss to Minnesota was certainly not Pollard's fault. The defensive tackle made 14 solo tackles, assisted with two others, recovered one fumble, and sacked Vikings' quarterbacks three times for losses of 17 yards.

Delvin Williams
San Francisco
Williams gave another indication of what the 49ers were hoping for after he led the NFL with more than 300 yards rushing during the preseason. He followed this performance by rushing for 121 yards and two touchdowns in a victory at Green Bay.

Reflections

The NFL began its fifty-seventh season this week with one of those Gone-With-The-Wind games that often result when the Oakland Raiders and Pittsburgh Steelers come together with the intensity of charging light brigades. The Raiders hurried for 17 points in the final three minutes to overcome the Steelers' 28-14 lead and win 31-28. That was almost enough to take the headlines away from Washington's bloodied but unbowed Billy Kilmer, who was injured late in the game against the New York Giants, then returned to drive the Redskins to a come-from-behind victory in the final minute. The Raiders and Kilmer provided the singular achievements in a week in which the NFL's newest teams, Seattle and Tampa Bay, had their initial coming-out parties. The expansionists were competitive in their first regular season games, Seattle losing to St. Louis 30-24 and Tampa Bay hanging tough before bowing to Houston 20-0.

While perhaps viewing these events with mild interest, Pittsburgh and Oakland hardly had expansion on their minds when they reenacted the tong wars in the Oakland Coliseum. The final outcome wasn't decided until rookie Fred Steinfort, the man who replaced George Blanda, kicked a 21-yard field goal with 18 seconds left in the game. A few minutes earlier the Steelers had the Raiders draped on the ropes. They were easily moving to a touchdown that would have increased their advantage to 35-14 when Franco Harris fumbled with 5:35 remaining and Oakland's Monte Johnson recovered on the Raiders' 25-yard line. The fumble did not seem particularly significant at the time, but Oakland got its foot in the door when quarterback Ken Stabler marshaled a nine-play drive that cut the Steelers' margin to 28-21 with 2:56 to go. Then things began to happen quickly. A Steelers' punt was partially blocked by Warren Bankston, and Charles Phillips recovered for Oakland on Pittsburgh's 29. Forty-six seconds later Stabler rolled two yards to his left to tie the game. A minute and nine seconds remained. Ten seconds later Oakland's Dave Rowe deflected Terry Bradshaw's pass. Willie Hall intercepted and returned the ball to the Steelers' 12. Three plays after that Steinfort sideswiped his winning kick.

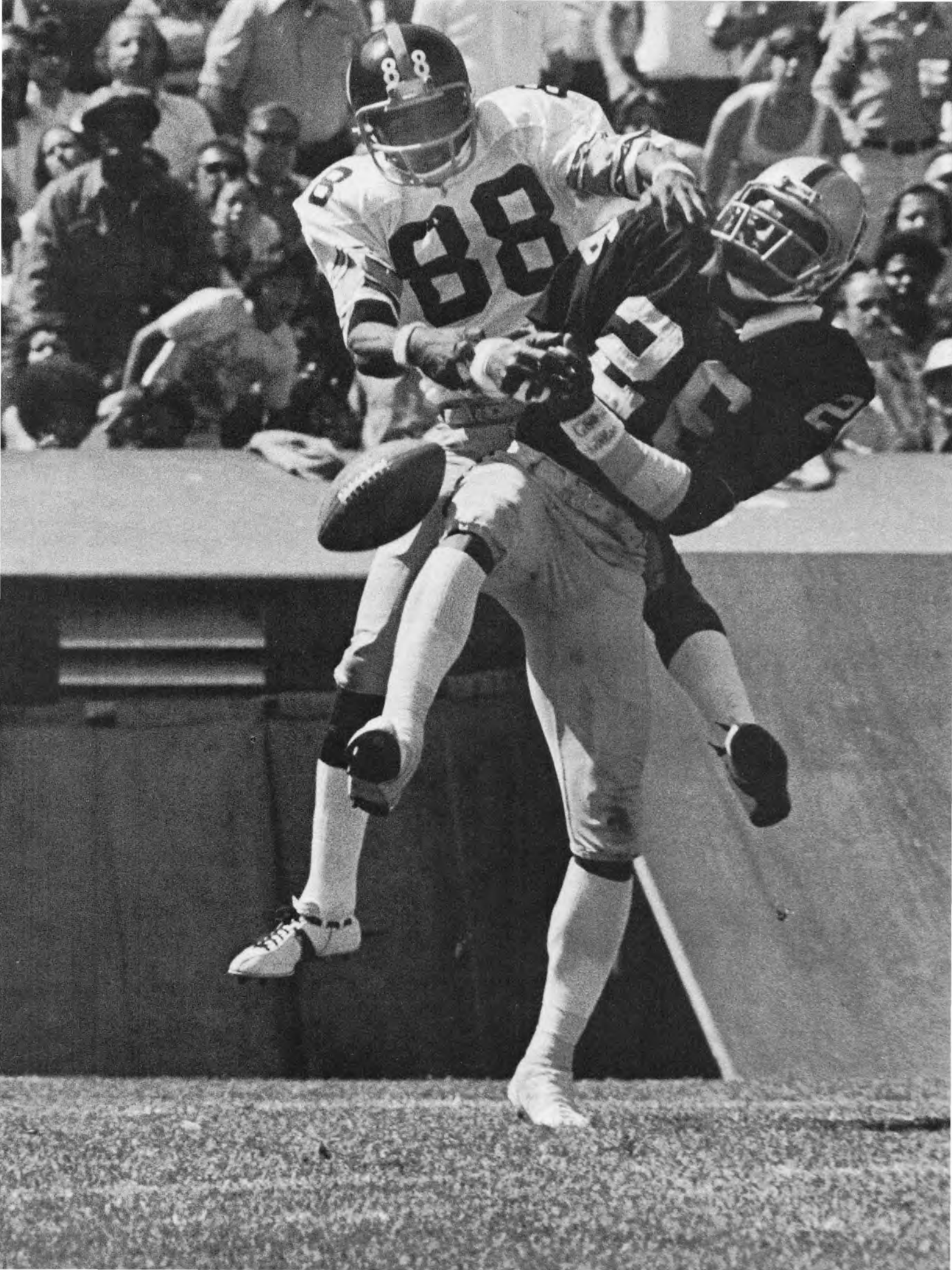
A finish similar to that in Oakland took place three time zones removed in the NFC East. Kilmer, the ultimate competitor, had sustained a cut over his nose and upper lip after the Giants had gone ahead 17-12 with less than five minutes in the game. Five stitches were sewn into Kilmer's ruddy features and he returned with 1:38 left and Washington in possession on New York's 42. After advancing to the 23, Kilmer stalled. But on fourth down he hit Roy Jefferson with a pass that set up the winning throw from the 5 to Mike Thomas with 45 seconds on the scoreboard. "There was no doubt I was coming back in," said Kilmer. But with blood seeping from the sutures? "Well, it was getting in my eyes so I couldn't see and on my hands so I couldn't grip the ball," Kilmer admitted.

Meanwhile, Seattle and Tampa Bay were faring about as well as most new teams have since the Dallas Cowboys signaled the era of expansion in 1960. The Cowboys were beaten by Pittsburgh 35-28 in their first game. The Atlanta Falcons lost to the Los Angeles Rams 19-14 in their opener in 1966, and the Rams defeated New Orleans 27-13 in the Saints' baptism in 1967. Oakland defeated Miami 23-14 in 1966 and San Diego topped Cincinnati 29-13 in 1968. The only exception was the Minnesota Vikings of 1961. For reasons still unfathomable to Chicago Bears' owner George Halas, the Vikings shocked the Bears 37-13. John Thompson, general manager at Seattle, was the Vikings' public relations director in 1961. "Fran Tarkenton threw for four touchdowns and ran for a fifth," Thompson remembered. "Today Jim Zorn [the Seattle quarterback] threw for two touchdowns and ran for a third. Zorn and Fran both wear jersey number 10 and both are scrambling quarterbacks, although Tarkenton is right-handed and Zorn is left-handed."

Zorn's a Thorn

The Seattle quarterback, a survivor of the World Football League, passed for 292 yards and rescued the Seahawks from a 30-10 deficit in the third quarter. The Cardinals insured the victory only after Mike Sensibaugh intercepted Zorn's 50-yard pass in the end zone on the final play of the game. Zorn had moved the Seahawks from their 18-yard line to St. Louis's 42 after getting the ball back for a final shot at victory with 1:18 left.

"Another minute and I have no doubt that we would have won," said Thompson.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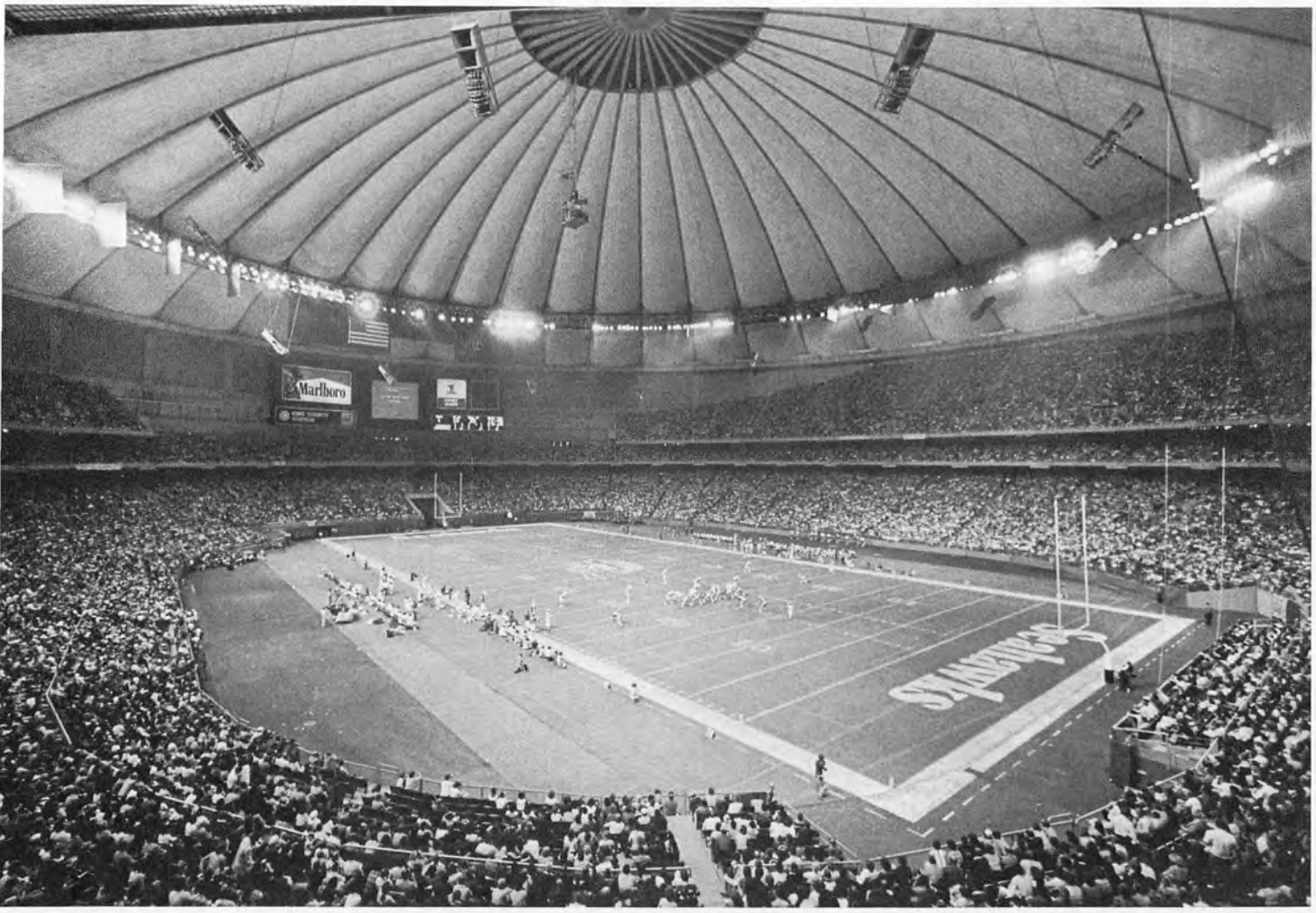
The not-yet-Cinderella Patriots stubbed their toes, the 49ers unveiled a potent defensive front, and expansion Seattle nearly surprised the powerful Cardinals.



◀ *(Top) Inaugurating the Kingdome, Seattle rallied under quarterback Jim Zorn to frighten St. Louis before losing 30-24. Seattle trailed 30-10, but Zorn brought the fledgling team back.*

◀ *(Near left) In the first quarter against the Jets, Greg Pruitt gained three yards. In the second quarter he added 97 and finished the game with 124 despite tackles like this one by Burgess Owens.*

◀ *Defensive end Lyle Alzado watches his Denver teammates during the second half of a frustrating loss to Cincinnati. He suffered an injury to his right knee and was out for the season.*

▲ *Larry Csonka gained 78 yards in his debut with the Giants, but New York lost to Washington in the final 45 seconds.*

▶ *After a protracted contract battle, Buffalo owner Ralph Wilson happily greeted O.J. Simpson. Obviously not yet in shape, O.J. gained just 38 yards in a 30-21 opening-game loss to Miami.*

Numbers

Standings

AFC East	W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP
Baltimore	1	0	0	1.000	27	13
Miami	1	0	0	1.000	30	21
Buffalo	0	1	0	.000	21	30
New England	0	1	0	.000	13	27
N.Y. Jets	0	1	0	.000	17	38
AFC Central						
Cincinnati	1	0	0	1.000	17	7
Cleveland	1	0	0	1.000	38	17
Houston	1	0	0	1.000	20	0
Pittsburgh	0	1	0	.000	28	31
AFC West						
Oakland	1	0	0	1.000	31	28
San Diego	1	0	0	1.000	30	16
Denver	0	1	0	.000	7	17
Kansas City	0	1	0	.000	16	30
Tampa Bay	0	1	0	.000	0	20
NFC East	**W**	**L**	**T**	**Pct.**	**Pts.**	**OP**
Dallas	1	0	0	1.000	27	7
St. Louis	1	0	0	1.000	30	24
Washington	1	0	0	1.000	19	17
N.Y. Giants	0	1	0	.000	17	19
Philadelphia	0	1	0	.000	7	27
NFC Central						
Chicago	1	0	0	1.000	10	3
Minnesota	1	0	0	1.000	40	9
Detroit	0	1	0	.000	3	10
Green Bay	0	1	0	.000	14	26
NFC West						
Los Angeles	1	0	0	1.000	30	14
San Francisco	1	0	0	1.000	26	14
Atlanta	0	1	0	.000	14	30
New Orleans	0	1	0	.000	9	40
Seattle	0	1	0	.000	24	30

Scores

American Football Conference
Baltimore 27, New England 13
Cincinnati 17, Denver 7
Cleveland 38, New York Jets 17
Oakland 31, Pittsburgh 28
San Diego 30, Kansas City 16
Houston 20, Tampa Bay 0
Miami 30, Buffalo 21

National Football Conference
Chicago 10, Detroit 3
Los Angeles 30, Atlanta 14
Minnesota 40, New Orleans 9
Washington 19, New York Giants 17
Dallas 27, Philadelphia 7
St. Louis 30, Seattle 24
San Francisco 26, Green Bay 14

Newsmakers

The Cardinals set a St. Louis team rushing record with 281 yards as **Jim Otis** provided 140 and **Terry Metcalf** 113. **Ronnie Coleman** of Houston led all rushers with 142, while two second-year players, Dallas's **Scott Laidlaw** (104) and Los Angeles's **John Cappelletti** (102) gained more than 100 yards in their first regular season starts. **Norm Bulaich's** 107 yards for Miami against Buffalo marked his first 100-yard game since 1973.

Seldom have two quarterbacks been more effective for one team in a single game than Cleveland's **Mike Phipps** and **Brian Sipe.** They totaled 18 completions in 25 attempts for five touchdowns.

Buffalo's **John Holland** made each catch count. He caught two for 111 yards and two touchdowns.

Week 2

The Second Week, September 19, 1976

▶ *No one ever accused John Cappelletti of being a finesse runner. Here he showed one more way to make a couple of yards. The former Penn State defensive back, who won the Heisman trophy, led the league in rushing after two weeks as the Rams tied Minnesota in overtime 10-10.*

People

Otis Armstrong
Denver
After missing the last 12 games of 1975 with a torn hamstring muscle, Armstrong was expected to return and improve the Broncos' offense. He rushed for 94 yards against the Jets as Denver amassed a club record 543 yards.

Mike Fuller
San Diego
Fuller returned eight punts for 105 yards. His number of returns was a club record and only one less than the NFL record. Since he joined the Chargers last season, Fuller has returned 45 punts without signaling for a fair catch. He also is a starting safety.

Jack Ham
Pittsburgh
The Steelers were booed as they left the field at the half trailing 14-0. A band in Three Rivers Stadium derisively played "Happy Days Are Here Again." Then Ham blocked a punt in the third quarter; the Steelers quickly scored 17 points and won 31-14.

Scott Laidlaw
Dallas
During the preseason Laidlaw was not being used. He went to Cowboys coach Tom Landry and said, "Hey, will I get a chance?" "You will, and be ready," said Landry. Laidlaw scored two touchdowns and had 71 yards rushing against New Orleans.

Ed O'Neil
Detroit
With 3:57 remaining in the game, the Lions and Atlanta were tied 10-10. Detroit lined up for a field goal, but quarterback Joe Reed ran with the ball and passed to linebacker O'Neil, who completed a 32-yard touchdown play that propelled the Lions to a win.

Dick Vermeil
Philadelphia
After leading UCLA to a surprising victory over Ohio State in the 1976 Rose Bowl, Vermeil became the Eagles' coach. The Eagles lost all six preseason games and a regular season game before presenting Vermeil with his first victory.

Reflections

The Los Angeles Rams were congratulating themselves this week for two of the best trades they never made. They did not trade John Cappelletti and they did not trade for O. J. Simpson. Cappelletti is leading the league in rushing after two games and his 125 yards in an overtime tie at Minnesota this week helped the Rams equal one of the most uncommon achievements in the 57-year history of the NFL. Cappelletti and teammate Lawrence McCutcheon each has gained at least 100 yards in the first two games. Only two other teams have fielded two 100-yard runners in successive weeks. The Rams did it in 1954 with Tank Younger and Dan Towler one week and with Younger and Skeet Quinlan the next. The Cleveland Browns accomplished the feat twice, in 1958 and in 1961 with Jim Brown and Bobby Mitchell. Cappelletti, a number one draft choice in 1974 after winning the Heisman trophy at Penn State, had hoped the Rams would trade him before the season. He was unhappy with the prolonged idleness that resulted from the team's use of McCutcheon at one running back position and Jim Bertelsen and Cullen Bryant at the other for the last two years. Cappelletti wrested a starting position this summer but during this period John and the rest of the Rams' ball carriers kept an eye on the events that began with Simpson asking the Buffalo Bills to trade him to a West Coast team, preferably Los Angeles, where O. J. maintains his permanent residence and where he aspires to a career in motion pictures after his playing days. The Rams tried hard for once-in-a-life-time-runner O. J. One of their enticements to the Bills was a choice from each of their 17 rounds in the 1977 college player draft. But the deal fell through.

While Cappelletti is no Simpson, he is a reasonable facsimile, a tough gut-runner willing to trade a bruise for an extra yard and perhaps this generation's answer to Jim Taylor, the Green Bay Packers' Hall of Fame halfback of the 1960s. It also does not hinder Cappelletti—or McCutcheon—to run behind the Rams' blockers, who continually uprooted the Vikings and cleared them out with the dispatch of army ants—except when the Rams got within a few feet of the goal line. The Rams had 75-yard drives stop at the 1-yard line twice. Otherwise it was a noteworthy performance by a team that was operating with its number three quarterback, rookie Pat Haden, who was making his first start after injuries to James Harris and Ron Jaworski. It rained the night before the game in Bloomington. The next day the Rams were hesitant to use McCutcheon on his favorite end sweeps because of the soft field. They also were reluctant to let Haden open up and pass with the abandon of the Vikings' quarterback, Fran Tarkenton, who threw 43 times. So the Rams just went straight ahead at Minnesota, overcoming a 10-0 deficit to tie the game late in the fourth quarter and twice intercepting Tarkenton in the overtime.

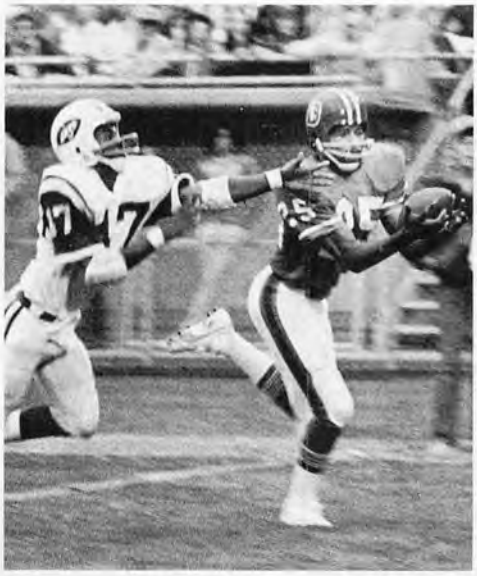
Buffalo would have been happy with the Rams' misfortunes. The Bills' loss to Houston was their second straight and Simpson, who reported to the team the night before the first game with Miami, still is trying to find his legs. He carried the ball five times for 28 yards and gained 43 yards on a short pass in a cameo appearance against the Dolphins, but was stopped cold by Houston's oppressive defense, advancing only 38 yards in 16 attempts. Baltimore, meanwhile, was taking advantage of Simpson's late arrival in Buffalo and of Miami's surprising difficulties in New England. The Colts beat Cincinnati 28-27, while the Dolphins lost to New England 30-14.

Of Ken, Bert, and Steve

Three of the AFC's best young quarterbacks were at the top of their games in these two contests. In a game in which the lead changed hands four times, Baltimore finally outlasted Cincinnati as Bert Jones threw for 301 yards, mostly to wide receiver Roger Carr, who caught six passes for 198 yards and three touchdowns. Cincinnati's Ken Anderson, now the NFL's most accurate passer in history after meeting the minimum standard of 1,500 passes, threw for 183 yards and a touchdown and had the Bengals in front 20-14 when he was injured just before the half. Anderson did not return until 4:42 remained in the game, by which time the Colts' defense had taken command. "Ken's going out made a big difference," said Baltimore end John Dutton. "It was a relief. We had one-tenth of a second more to get to [John] Reaves, who's not as mobile as Anderson." New England's Steve Grogan was more mobile than anyone, rushing for 76 yards in nine carries, scoring once on a brilliant 13-yard run, and passing for three touchdowns.

CAPPELLETTI
J. WHITE
27

John Cappelletti gave Los Angeles a great one-two punch, Ken Stabler was on target, Dick Vermeil won his first pro game, and the Rams and Vikings went 'round and 'round.



▲ *Terry Metcalf was a long jumper at Cal State-Long Beach and went for the NFL record behind this block by St. Louis tackle Roger Finnie.*

◀ *(Near left) Cleveland quarterback Brian Sipe wasn't born with a handle, which made this tackle by Pittsburgh's Joe Greene illegal—and it didn't go unnoticed by the officials.*

◀ *Haven Moses caught this Steve Ramsey pass for a 14-yard touchdown, beating Jets' cornerback Roscoe Word. Moses caught four passes for 77 yards as Denver swamped New York 46-3.*

▶ *(Top) Roger Carr caught passes for 1,112 yards last year to lead the NFL, and he showed his speed to Cincinnati, catching touchdowns of 68, 22, and 65 yards. He caught six passes for 198 yards.*

▶ *San Diego's Rickey Young ran for 85 yards and caught passes for 41 more in a 23-0 whitewash of Tampa Bay.*

Numbers

Standings

AFC East	W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP
Baltimore	2	0	0	1.000	55	40
Miami	1	1	0	.500	44	51
New England	1	1	0	.500	43	41
Buffalo	0	2	0	.000	24	43
N.Y. Jets	0	2	0	.000	20	84
AFC Central						
Houston	2	0	0	1.000	33	3
Cincinnati	1	1	0	.500	44	35
Cleveland	1	1	0	.500	52	48
Pittsburgh	1	1	0	.500	59	45
AFC West						
Oakland	2	0	0	1.000	55	49
San Diego	2	0	0	1.000	53	16
Denver	1	1	0	.500	53	20
Kansas City	0	2	0	.000	37	54
Tampa Bay	0	2	0	.000	0	43
NFC East	**W**	**L**	**T**	**Pct.**	**Pts.**	**OP**
Dallas	2	0	0	1.000	51	13
St. Louis	2	0	0	1.000	59	24
Washington	2	0	0	1.000	50	24
Philadelphia	1	1	0	.500	27	34
N.Y. Giants	0	2	0	.000	24	39
NFC Central						
Chicago	2	0	0	1.000	29	15
Minnesota	1	0	1	.750	50	19
Detroit	1	1	0	.500	27	20
Green Bay	0	2	0	.000	14	55
NFC West						
Los Angeles	1	0	1	.750	40	24
San Francisco	1	1	0	.500	38	33
Atlanta	0	2	0	.000	24	54
New Orleans	0	2	0	.000	15	64
Seattle	0	2	0	.000	31	61

Scores

American Football Conference
Baltimore 28, Cincinnati 27
Pittsburgh 31, Cleveland 14
Houston 13, Buffalo 3
New England 30, Miami 14
Denver 46, New York Jets 3
San Diego 23, Tampa Bay 0
Oakland 24, Kansas City 21

National Football Conference
Detroit 24, Atlanta 10
Chicago 19, San Francisco 12
Dallas 24, New Orleans 6
St. Louis 29, Green Bay 0
Los Angeles 10, Minnesota 10, overtime
Philadelphia 20, New York Giants 7
Washington 31, Seattle 7

Newsmakers

Second-year runners **Walter Payton** of Chicago and **Mike Thomas** of Washington had their biggest days. Payton rushed for 148 yards and two touchdowns, Thomas for 143 and two touchdowns. **Franco Harris** of Pittsburgh gained 118 yards; his twentieth 100-yard performance tied him with **Gale Sayers** for sixth place on the all-time list.

Oakland's **Ken Stabler** drove Kansas City to distraction with his accuracy. Before leaving the game with a strained knee, he completed 22 of 28 passes for 224 yards and three touchdowns. Washington's **Billy Kilmer** was nearly as effective, completing 17 of 25 for 184 yards and three scores.

Rookie **Sammie White,** of Minnesota caught nine passes for 139 yards and a touchdown.

Week 3

The Third Week, September 26, 1976

▶ *New England's one-two kicking punch teamed up to help beat Pittsburgh 30-27. First came a 42-yard field goal, then this 40-yarder on which punter-holder Mike Patrick did more cheering than placekicker John Smith, who later added a 26-yarder.*

People

Steve Grogan
New England
Two weeks ago, Grogan passed for three touchdowns and ran for a fourth in a win over Miami. This week he threw for two touchdowns and ran for a third. The Patriots, beaten by Baltimore 27-13 in their opening game, won their second straight.

George Halas
Chicago
The Bears' chairman of the board observed one of the most distinctive milestones in the history of professional sports. Chicago played the one-thousandth game since 1921. The 82-year-old Halas has been the Bears' owner since then.

Jim Marshall
Minnesota
The 38-year-old defensive end, a veteran of 17 seasons in the NFL, has played in every regular season game in Vikings' history, beginning in 1961. This week was the two-hundred twenty-fifth, giving Marshall a record for most consecutive games.

Dewey McClain
Atlanta
The Falcons upset the Bears' 1,000-game celebration by scoring all their points of a 10-0 victory in the fourth quarter. McClain recovered Steve Schubert's fumble on a punt return, setting up a three-yard touchdown by Haskel Stanback.

Mike Rae
Oakland
After three seasons in Canada, Rae joined the Raiders this season and led them to a victory at Houston in his first start. With starting quarterback Ken Stabler injured, Rae practiced with the first team only on the day before the game.

Rick Upchurch
Denver
Upchurch tied an NFL record with 73- and 47-yard touchdowns on punt returns, matching Detroit's Jack Christiansen (1951) and the New York Titans' Dick Christy (1961). Upchurch's first touchdown got the Broncos started to their victory.

Reflections

Even Tom Landry couldn't restrain himself. "This is what pro football is all about," said the coach of the Dallas Cowboys after they had beaten Baltimore 30-27 in a Texas Stadium drama that had every element of football, from the razzle-dazzle of improvising kids playing choose-up on a corner lot to the computer-fed game plans of the NFL. Landry, who normally masks his emotions behind a taciturn facade, could have been summing up the entire NFL's enervating third week, which began Sunday with the Cowboys' Efren Herrera kicking a 32-yard field goal in the final three seconds to beat the Colts and ended at 1:05 A.M. Tuesday in Philadelphia, where the Eagles and Washington Redskins knocked heads for more than four hours. Mark Moseley's 29-yard kick in the thirteenth minute of overtime finally won it for Washington 20-17. In between those epic games there were several other achievements, notably the sudden emergence of the San Diego Chargers. The Chargers have won their first three games for the first time since 1968.

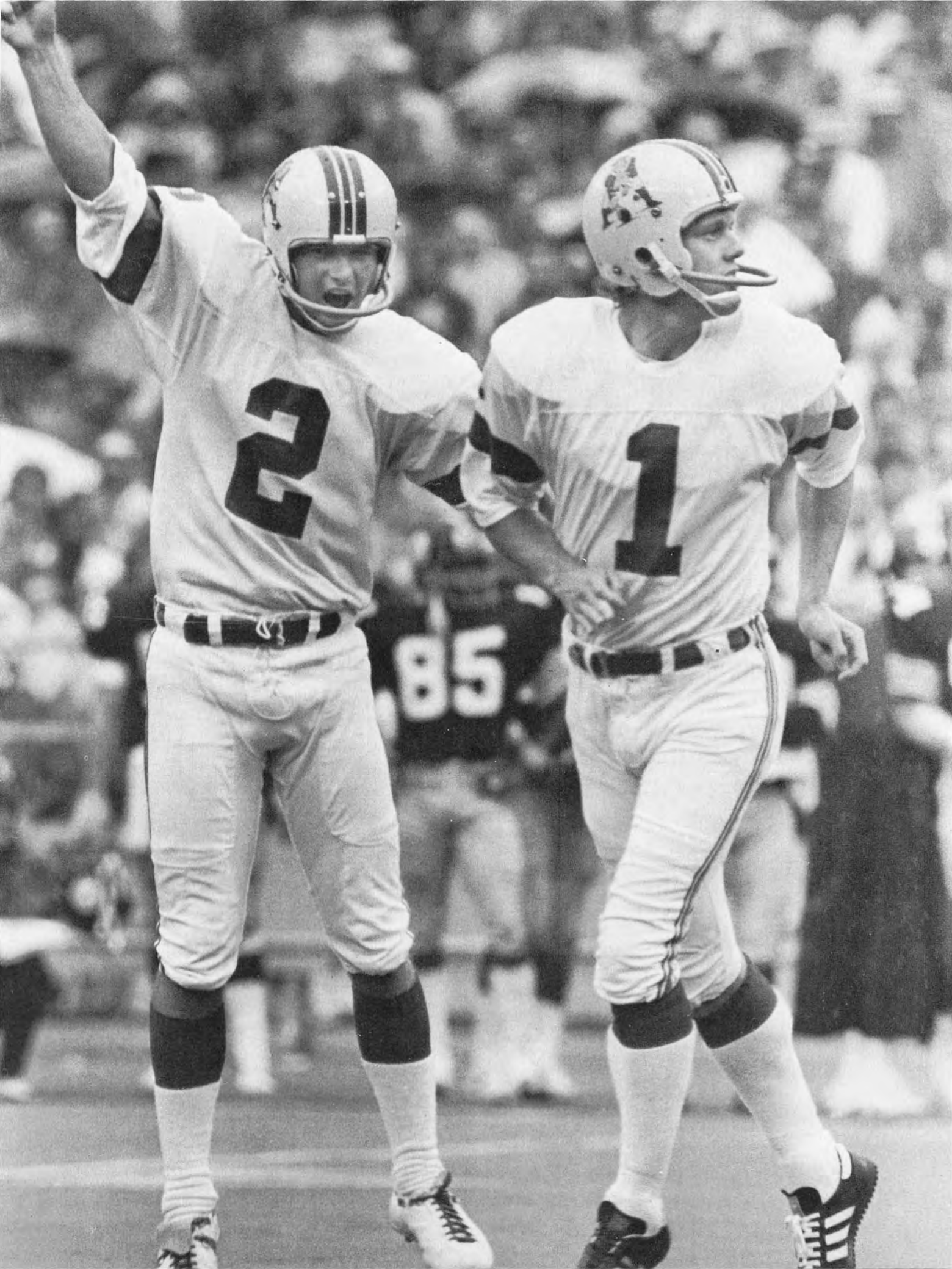
What excited Landry was a circus of big plays. The two teams changed leads four times in the fourth quarter, and sudden death appeared likely when Baltimore's Toni Linhart kicked a 24-yard field goal to tie the score at 27 with 28 seconds left. The Cowboys took over on their 32-yard line with 23 seconds remaining following the kickoff. Roger Staubach passed 16 yards to Drew Pearson, before a pass interference penalty put the ball on the Colts' 32 with 12 seconds left. Six seconds later Pearson was on the 15 after another Staubach pass. That set it up for Herrera. "Charlie Waters came over and asked me how I felt," Herrera said of the moment before he took the field. "I told him I felt fine but that my shoe was wet from the rain." Waters had a reasonable solution. "Get a dry shoe," he told the Cowboys' kicker, who apparently hadn't thought of that. The Colts should have thought of something to do about Staubach. He completed 22 of 28 passes for 339 yards and two touchdowns on his best day in eight seasons with Dallas. But the pass that may be remembered longest was thrown by Drew Pearson, a former college quarterback who has made his reputation in the professionals with some big catches. Pearson's 39-yard strike to Golden Richards in the first quarter began with a simplistic maneuver: Staubach handed off to Doug Dennison in what Baltimore diagnosed as a sweep. But Dennison gave the ball to Pearson coming back against the grain on an apparent wide receiver reverse. Pearson, however, threw a perfect pass to Richards in the end zone. To paraphrase Landry, maybe that's what pro football *should* be about.

Washington stayed even with Dallas's 3-0 record in the NFC East by presenting George Allen with the one-hundredth victory of his 11 seasons as an NFL head coach. But only after a long, long struggle. As the clock struck midnight in Philadelphia, broadcaster Howard Cosell wistfully looked at his watch and noted that he was not going to get much sleep that night. Cosell was scheduled to be in New York that morning to appear on the "Good Morning, America" show. After the Redskins returned home, Allen didn't doze off until daybreak. "It seems I never can get to sleep if we win or lose," he said. "Maybe we should tie a few games." The effort had taken so much out of each team that when Moseley's kick passed through the uprights, the reaction was more one of relief, not celebration or dejection.

A Bolt of Lightning

The Chargers shook St. Louis on the first play of the game. Quarterback Dan Fouts threw a short pass to Charlie Joiner, who pivoted and arched his way to the sideline as guard Doug Wilkerson cut down Cardinals' defender Roger Wehrli with a great block. Joiner had a 59-yard gain before he was halted. On the next play Don Woods carried one side of the St. Louis defense 13 yards for a score. As it turned out, San Diego was just warming up. The Chargers scored 27 points in the second quarter as Fouts threw three touchdown passes, more than he had last season.

Two of his touchdowns were to Dwight McDonald, a wide receiver the Chargers released at the final cutdown but re-signed after an injury to Gary Garrison last week. "This beats tennis," said McDonald, who had been spending most of his time playing that game. It was the Cardinals' first regular season appearance in San Diego since they hired coach Don Coryell, who had an outstanding record from 1961-1972 at San Diego State. "A helluva welcome," Coryell said facetiously of his homecoming.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Dallas used a surprise pass and last-minute heroics to beat Baltimore, the Chargers remained a surprise, and the football "weekend" lasted until Tuesday.

◀ *St. Louis running back Wayne Morris found the going rough in San Diego. He wound up with just three yards rushing this depressing day as the rejuvenated Chargers stunned the Cardinals 43-24.*

◀ *(Far left and left) Only 12 seconds remained in the first half when Philadelphia halfback Herb Lusk fumbled. Washington linebacker Brad Dusek barely had to stoop to scoop it up. His 32-yard run with three seconds left tied the score 10-10 and the Redskins won 30-27 in overtime.*

▲ *(Top) Roger Staubach was almost uncanny as he riddled the Colts' defense. His perfect strikes late in the game beat Baltimore 30-27 and helped keep the Cowboys unbeaten.*

▲ *Despite fierce pressure such as this from Houston linebacker Robert Brazile, reserve quarterback Mike Rae kept Oakland unbeaten with a 14-13 victory over the Oilers.*

▲ *(Right) Tampa Bay went scoreless in its first two games, so a 14-9 loss to Buffalo was almost a moral victory. Running back Ed Williams gained 50 yards rushing to lead the Buccaneers.*

Numbers

Standings

AFC East	W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP
Baltimore	2	1	0	.667	82	70
Miami	2	1	0	.667	60	51
New England	2	1	0	.667	73	68
Buffalo	1	2	0	.333	38	52
N.Y. Jets	0	3	0	.000	20	100
AFC Central						
Cincinnati	2	1	0	.667	72	42
Houston	2	1	0	.667	46	17
Cleveland	1	2	0	.333	65	92
Pittsburgh	1	2	0	.333	86	75
AFC West						
Oakland	3	0	0	1.000	69	62
San Diego	3	0	0	1.000	96	40
Denver	2	1	0	.667	97	33
Kansas City	0	3	0	.000	54	81
Tampa Bay	0	3	0	.000	9	57
NFC East	**W**	**L**	**T**	**Pct.**	**Pts.**	**OP**
Dallas	3	0	0	1.000	81	40
Washington	3	0	0	1.000	70	41
St. Louis	2	1	0	.667	83	67
Philadelphia	1	2	0	.333	44	54
N.Y. Giants	0	3	0	.000	34	63
NFC Central						
Minnesota	2	0	1	.833	60	28
Chicago	2	1	0	.667	29	25
Detroit	1	2	0	.333	36	30
Green Bay	0	3	0	.000	21	83
NFC West						
Los Angeles	2	0	1	.833	64	34
San Francisco	2	1	0	.667	75	54
Atlanta	1	2	0	.333	34	54
New Orleans	1	2	0	.333	42	81
Seattle	0	3	0	.000	52	98

Scores

American Football Conference
Buffalo 14, Tampa Bay 9
Denver 44, Cleveland 13
New England 30, Pittsburgh 27
Miami 16, New York Jets 0
Oakland 14, Houston 13

National Football Conference
Atlanta 10, Chicago 0
Minnesota 10, Detroit 9
Los Angeles 24, New York Giants 10
San Francisco 37, Seattle 21
Washington 20, Philadelphia 17, Overtime

Interconference Games
Cincinnati 28, Green Bay 7
New Orleans 27, Kansas City 17
San Diego 43, St. Louis 24
Dallas 30, Baltimore 27
AFC, 2 victories; NFC, 2 victories.

Newsmakers

New Orleans' coach **Hank Stram** said he was looking for "thunder and lightning" when the Saints drafted **Tony Galbreath** and **Chuck Muncie** this year. Both of these natural phenomenons struck this week, Galbreath (Thunder) rushing for 146 yards and scoring on 74-yard and 9-yard runs, and Muncie (Lightning) rushing for 126 yards.

Seattle rookie **Steve Largent,** a preseason acquisition from Houston, caught seven passes for 128 yards and one touchdown.

Jim Plunkett had his best day since being traded from New England to San Francisco. Plunkett completed 16 of 29 passes for three touchdowns

Week 4

The Fourth Week, October 3, 1976

▶ Bill Bergey's uncompromising devotion to head-knocking helped the Eagles win their second game after a winless preseason. After an opening loss, Philadelphia beat the Giants, lost a heartbreaking overtime game to Washington, and then upended Atlanta.

People

Ken Anderson
Cincinnati
Bengals' coach Bill Johnson says Anderson has never been sharper than he was this week—not even when he set a record by completing 20 of 22 passes in one game in 1974. Anderson threw for 265 yards and four touchdowns.

Mike Boryla
Philadelphia
Boryla had a problem. He couldn't understand the coaches' signal from the sideline over what play to call. Boryla then came up with his own in the huddle. He threw a nine-yard pass to Charlie Smith for the touchdown that brought the Eagles a victory.

Cleveland Elam
San Francisco
The 49ers were clinging to a 3-0 lead over the New York Jets in the third quarter when Elam helped pressure Jets' passer Joe Namath, who fumbled the ball under a heavy rush. Elam picked up the ball and ran 31 yards for a touchdown.

Chuck Foreman
Minnesota
Fran Tarkenton was on the sidelines with an injury, so Foreman carried the brunt of Minnesota's attack against Pittsburgh. His 148 yards in 27 carries were enough as Minnesota won the first meeting between the teams since the Steelers' win in Super Bowl IX.

Steve Odom
Green Bay
Odom caught a 40-yard touchdown pass from running back Willard Harrell in Green Bay's first victory after three opening losses. He also returned a kickoff 88 yards to set up another touchdown, then ran 17 yards on a reverse to position a third touchdown.

O. J. Simpson
Buffalo
Simpson started slowly after reporting late to Buffalo, but he appears to be rounding into form. His 130 yards rushing against Kansas City this week marked the thirty-third time he has rushed for at least 100 yards. He had 102 in the first half.

Reflections

The Los Angeles Rams had an equipment problem this week, but that was nothing compared to the difficulties experienced by the Oakland Raiders, Pittsburgh Steelers, and Washington Redskins. Thieves stole about $1,000 in helmets, shoulder pads, and coaches' shoes from the Rams' dressing room before their game in Miami against the Dolphins. The Rams overcame this setback—not to mention a 14-0 Dolphins' lead at the half—to win 31-28. The Steelers, Raiders, and Redskins all lost their games, and perhaps something more important: an aura of superiority that seems to surround powerful teams. Pittsburgh, champion of Super Bowls IX and X, offered a shockingly uneven performance when it was beaten 17-6 by Minnesota this week. Oakland's 48-17 loss to New England represented the most points the Raiders have given up in a game since 1963. Washington was pushed around by Chicago 33-7 and if it hadn't been for a 47-yard pass interference penalty that put the ball on Chicago's 1-yard line with one second left in the game, the Redskins probably would have been shut out for the first time since 1961.

Perhaps it is too early to say that a trend has been set, but these developments may be symbolic of more interesting divisional races throughout the league, especially in the AFC. After four weeks, Oakland, Denver, and San Diego are tied for first place in the AFC West. New England is tied for first with Baltimore in the East, and Pittsburgh is two games behind front-running Cincinnati and Houston in the Central. Denver knocked San Diego from the unbeaten list 26-0 this week. The Broncos and New England appear to be the most improved teams in the AFC. The Broncos have scored 117 points in their last three games and given up only 26. After an opening loss to Baltimore, the Patriots waded into really deep water and emerged with successive victories over Miami, Pittsburgh, and Oakland.

Washington's loss doesn't put the Redskins in immediate jeopardy in the NFC East, but Chicago's victory may mean that the Bears are good enough to stick close to Minnesota in the Central. The Vikings have won the division championship every year except one since 1968 and the race usually isn't close. The Bears, who have won three of their first four games, have not won more than four in one year since 1971. Before the game with George Allen's Redskins, Chicago coach Jack Pardee wasn't sure how much improved the Bears were over their 4-10 finish of 1975. "We're not a real good team and we're not a bad one," he said after a 10-0 loss to Atlanta the previous week. "To win, we have to play our very best. When we do, we can beat anyone. When we don't. . . . " Defense, which was a Bears' hallmark for generations, has been Chicago's biggest asset this year. The Bears sacked Washington quarterback Billy Kilmer and his replacement Joe Theismann a total of six times, giving the Bears a league-leading total of 23, and the Redskins' touchdown was only the third the Bears' defense has surrendered in four games. Pardee was the defensive captain of many of Allen's teams in Los Angeles and Washington.

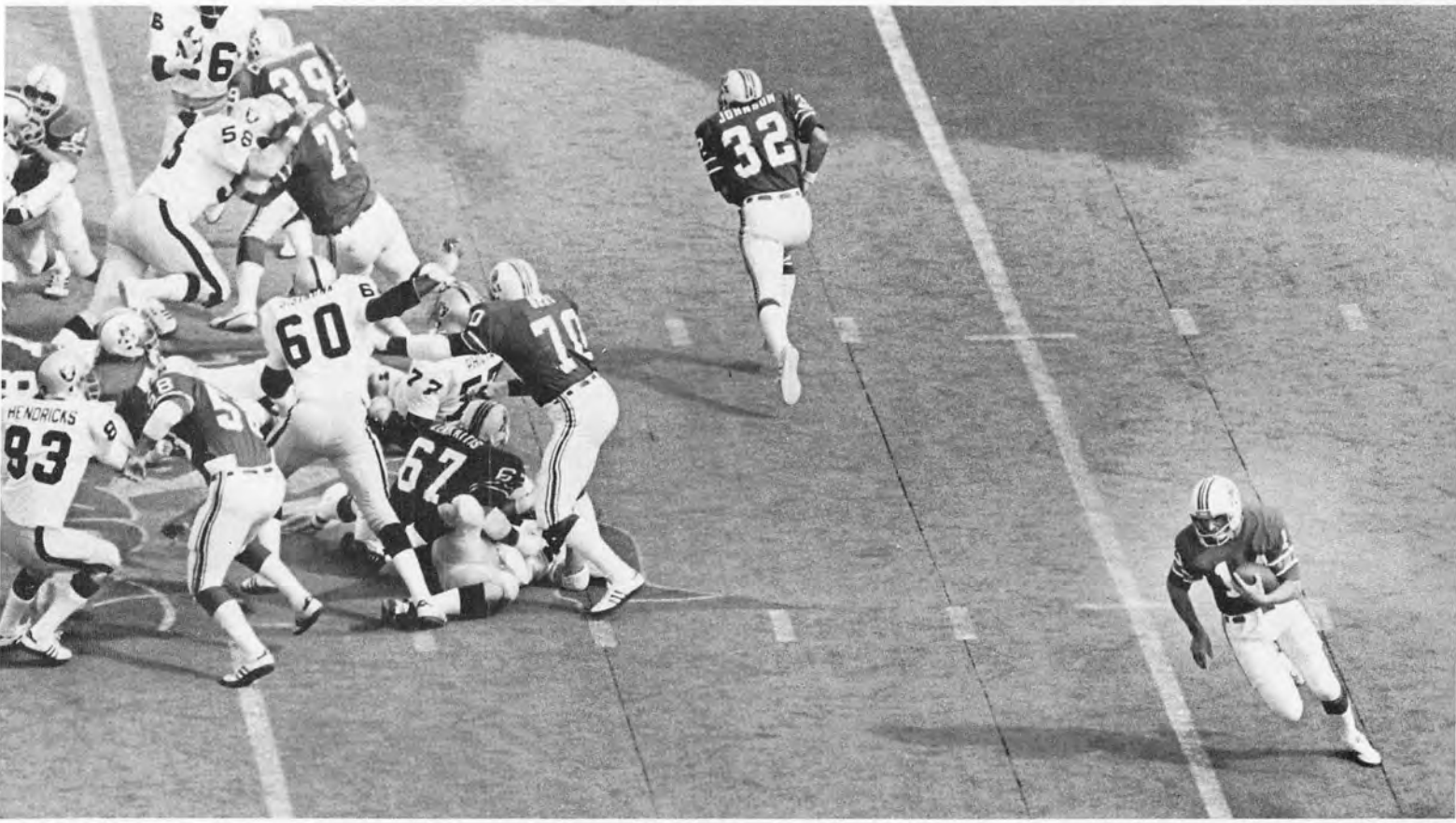
It's a little early to be forecasting a Super Bowl champion this year, but the Rams and Dallas Cowboys appear the strongest of the eight teams that made the playoffs last year. Dallas is the NFL's only unbeaten and untied team and the Rams and the Vikings are unbeaten but played each other to a 10-10 tie. Because of injuries, the Rams have started three quarterbacks in four games. Quarterback has been a position of controversy for years in Los Angeles, but James Harris may finally have won over his detractors, who have been in the camps of either Ron Jaworski or Pat Haden.

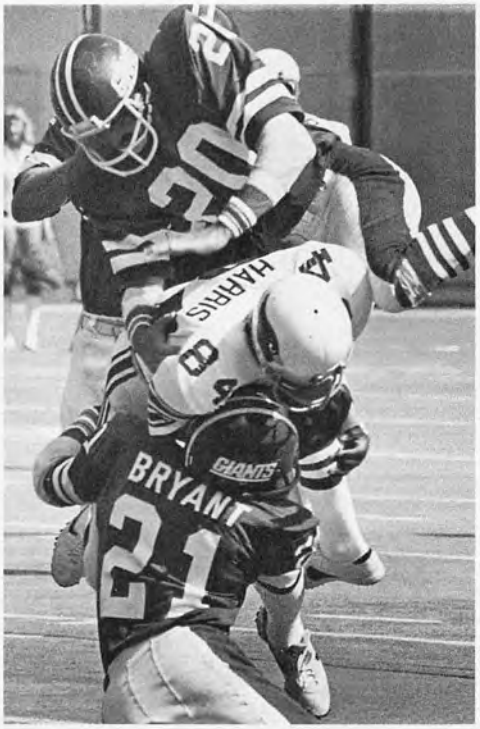
Member of "400 Club"

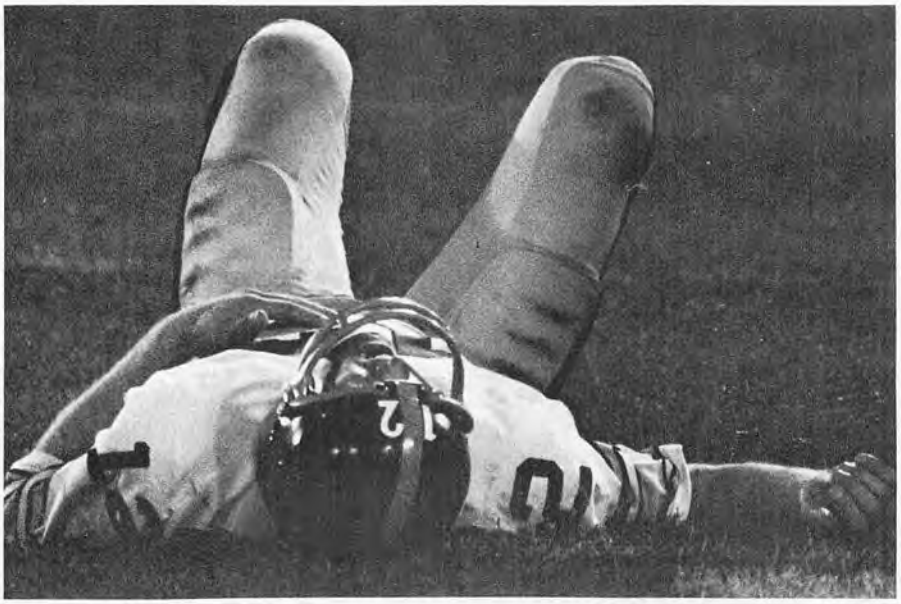
Harris passed for 436 yards and two touchdowns as the Rams came back to win on Tom Dempsey's 19-yard field goal. Harris's total was the fifteenth highest for one game in the league's 57-year history and it was only the thirty-first time that anyone has amassed 400 yards. Wide receiver Ron Jessie profited the most, catching seven passes for 220 yards and two touchdowns.

Harris was one of the lucky Rams who didn't have his equipment stolen when burglars apparently entered through a vent over the coaches' dressing room. Nine starters either had to share a helmet with someone else or were forced to use what equipment manager Don Hewitt described as "backup helmets." Commented defensive end Fred Dryer, "I thought I was wearing a trash can." Hewitt, for his innovations, was awarded a game ball.

James Harris riddled the Dolphins for 436 yards passing, O. J. Simpson finally made his presence felt, and Dave Casper shot into the NFL lead in pass receptions.







◀ *(Top) This photograph is practically a textbook study of the misdirection play. Quarterback Steve Grogan faked a handoff to running back Andy Johnson (32). As everyone else headed for one side, Grogan gained yardage the other way around. The Patriots inflicted a stinging 48-17 defeat on the Raiders.*

◀ *(Near left) Ike Harris caught 15 passes as a rookie and 52 in 1976 to lead the Cardinals. His five catches for 44 yards against the Giants led to a 27-21 victory.*

◀ *The Rams' defense against the run showed signs of weakness. It permitted Miami 219 yards on the ground, 111 by Benny Malone. However, on this play, Malone was cut down by Jack Reynolds from below and Larry Brooks from above.*

▲ *(Top) On one of his two catches against Tampa Bay, tight end Raymond Chester's visibility and room to run were hampered by the Buccaneers' Danny Reece.*

▲ *It was truly a long night for Pittsburgh's Terry Bradshaw. Mesmerized by the Vikings' defense, the Steelers' offense surrendered quietly.*

Numbers

Standings

AFC East	W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP
Baltimore	3	1	0	.750	124	87
New England	3	1	0	.750	121	85
Buffalo	2	2	0	.500	88	69
Miami	2	2	0	.500	88	82
N.Y. Jets	0	4	0	.000	26	117
AFC Central						
Cincinnati	3	1	0	.750	117	66
Houston	3	1	0	.750	77	43
Cleveland	1	3	0	.250	89	137
Pittsburgh	1	3	0	.250	92	92
AFC West						
Denver	3	1	0	.750	123	33
Oakland	3	1	0	.750	86	110
San Diego	3	1	0	.750	96	66
Kansas City	0	4	0	.000	71	131
Tampa Bay	0	4	0	.000	26	99
NFC East	**W**	**L**	**T**	**Pct.**	**Pts.**	**OP**
Dallas	4	0	0	1.000	109	53
St. Louis	3	1	0	.750	110	88
Washington	3	1	0	.750	77	74
Philadelphia	2	2	0	.500	58	67
N.Y. Giants	0	4	0	.000	55	90
NFC Central						
Minnesota	3	0	1	.875	77	34
Chicago	3	1	0	.750	62	32
Detroit	1	3	0	.250	50	54
Green Bay	1	3	0	.250	45	97
NFC West						
Los Angeles	3	0	1	.875	95	62
San Francisco	3	1	0	.750	92	60
Atlanta	1	3	0	.250	47	68
New Orleans	1	3	0	.250	68	112
Seattle	0	4	0	.000	65	126

Scores

American Football Conference
Cincinnati 45, Cleveland 24
Buffalo 50, Kansas City 17
New England 48, Oakland 17
Denver 26, San Diego 0
Baltimore 42, Tampa Bay 17

National Football Conference
Dallas 28, Seattle 13
Green Bay 24, Detroit 14
St. Louis 27, New York Giants 21
Philadelphia 14, Atlanta 13
Chicago 33, Washington 7

Interconference Games
Houston 31, New Orleans 26
Los Angeles 31, Miami 28
San Francisco 17, New York Jets 6
Minnesota 17, Pittsburgh 6
NFC, 5 victories; AFC, 3 victories.

Newsmakers

Sam Cunningham didn't score any of New England's 48 points, but he was the Patriots' most effective running back, rushing for 101 yards in 21 carries and catching five passes for 94 yards.

Brian Sipe threw 42 of the 69 passes that filled the air in the Cleveland-Cincinnati game. His 26 completions for 290 yards and two touchdowns were his best day in four seasons with the Browns.

Oakland's **Dave Casper** caught 10 passes in the first half and was within reach of the NFL record of 18, set by Los Angeles's **Tom Fears** in 1950. Casper finished the game with 12 for 136 yards. The New York Giants' **Doug Kotar** caught 11 for 132 yards.

Week 5

The Fifth Week, October 10, 1976

▶ *It was a game of firsts for the Jets: John Ebersole's first interception in six years, Joe Namath's first touchdown pass of the season, and the Jets' first victory, 17-14 over Buffalo. His teammates hugged kicker Pat Leahy, whose field goal in the last 48 seconds won it.*

People

Fred Biletnikoff
Oakland
Biletnikoff caught four passes and had another for a touchdown called back because of a penalty at San Diego. The total catches gave Biletnikoff 506 for his 11-year career, moving him past Billy Howton (503) into the number seven ranking all time.

Matt Blair
Minnesota
The Vikings are facing stiff competition throughout the division as they seek their eighth NFC Central title in nine years, and Blair provided the difference in a narrow 20-19 victory over Chicago. He blocked one of Bob Thomas's point-after touchdown attempts.

Tommy Casanova
Cincinnati
Casanova was a principal figure in the Bengals' 21-0 victory over Tampa Bay. He picked up a fumble and ran 25 yards for a touchdown, and his interception in the first quarter set up another touchdown. Cincinnati's victory was its fourth in five games.

John Ebersole
New York Jets
Ebersole intercepted a pass against Buffalo. It was his first since 1970 and the theft positioned the Jets for their second touchdown in a 17-14 surprise of Buffalo. After Ebersole's interception, Joe Namath threw his first touchdown pass of the year.

Mike Livingston
Kansas City
Livingston threw for a career-high 332 yards in the Chiefs' win over Washington. The winning score came when he handed off to Woody Green who gave the ball to Henry Marshall, who lateraled to Livingston, who passed 36 yards to Larry Brunson.

Jim Merlo
New Orleans
The Saints are achieving as never before in their nine-year history. The 30-0 victory over Atlanta represented the most one-sided defeat New Orleans has administered. Merlo started it when he returned an intercepted pass 83 yards for a touchdown.

Reflections

The Oakland Raiders were hurting for defensive linemen this week. A team spokesman was moved to remark, not entirely in jest, "We're one sprained ankle away from going to a two-five defense." The San Diego Chargers were hurting at the thought of defensing the Raiders' passing attack, especially wide receiver Cliff Branch. "After other receivers catch the ball, you're lining up for a first down," said Chargers coach Tommy Prothro. "After Branch catches it, you're lining up for an extra point."

Meanwhile, there were some important firsts being confronted around the NFL. San Francisco's Monte Clark was facing his first critical test as a head coach; New York Jets head coach Lou Holtz was looking for his first victory, and Cleveland quarterback Brian Sipe was awaiting the arrival of his first offspring.

Taking them in order: Oakland's concern was unfounded for the most part; San Diego's worst fears were confirmed; Clark passed with flying colors; so did Holtz; and Sipe weathered perhaps the most hectic 48 hours of his life and emerged with the knowledge that mother and child were doing just fine.

After getting pushed around 48-17 in New England last week, the Raiders seemed to be a team on the ropes waiting for up-and-coming San Diego to punch its lights out and take over the lead in the AFC West. That was the reward for the winner of their game, since Denver, another front-runner, was defeated by Houston. The Raiders' defense, talent-depleted with injuries, showed much elasticity in San Diego, giving up 383 yards, but it didn't snap, allowing only 17 points. In the starting three-man front only Otis Sistrunk was a 1975 regular. Dave Rowe was acquired in a trade last season and John Matuszak recently signed as a free agent. The timely performance of the Raiders' defense was complemented by the offense, which rolled up 476 yards behind the guided-missile throwing of quarterback Ken Stabler and the receiving of Branch, who caught five passes for 167 yards and two touchdowns. Branch left the confused Chargers' secondary in a petrified state as he veered in and out of harm's way and turned on uncommon bursts of speed. Stabler, operating behind some of the most accomplished pass blockers in the NFL, completed 20 of 26 passes for 339 yards and three touchdowns in a 27-17 victory. He had two others called back.

Stabler has completed 65.4 percent of his passes this season, a tribute in part to such wily mastadons as guard Gene Upshaw and tackle Art Shell, the biggest and most valuable Oakland forwards. Dallas's Roger Staubach has an incredible 73.5 completion accuracy, but, unlike Stabler, Staubach is not a stationary target for pass rushers. Stabler seldom leaves the pocket; Staubach seldom stays in it.

Los Angeles quarterback James Harris could have used some of Staubach's mobility. Everytime Harris tried to desert his passing pocket, he was met by San Francisco's Tommy Hart, Cedrick Hardman, Cleveland Elam, and Jimmy Webb. Harris was sacked 10 times, 6 of them by Hart. The 49ers have been known for years for their apathetic performances against Los Angeles—10 straight losses from 1970 through the teams' first meeting in 1975—but this week they turned in one of the most convincing turnabouts of the season. A 16-0 victory carried San Francisco into first place in the NFC West and knocked the Rams out of that position for the first time since Chuck Knox became Los Angeles coach in 1973. San Francisco Coach Monte Clark was not ready to make Super Bowl plans, however. "This is no panacea," he said with professorial wisdom. "Look what happened to New England. They beat Oakland badly last week and were beaten badly by Detroit this week."

Who Said It Was Easy?

The Lions' 30-10 win over the Patriots gave Tommy Hudspeth a victory in his first game since he replaced Rick Forzano as the Lions' head coach. Hudspeth was spared the initiation that befell the Jets' Lou Holtz, who watched his team lose five of its six preseason games and all of its first four regular season contests. "Somebody told me the first one would be the toughest," said Holtz after a 17-14 victory over Buffalo. "But I didn't know it would be this tough."

And then there was Brian Sipe. On Sunday he started for the Browns against Pittsburgh. With his team trailing 10-6 late in the second quarter, Sipe sustained a concussion. He spent Monday in the hospital. On Tuesday he watched his wife give birth to a 7-pound, 14-ounce girl. The child was named Lani Seville. Lani is a Hawaiian name and Seville is the Cleveland suburb in which Brian and his wife live during the season.

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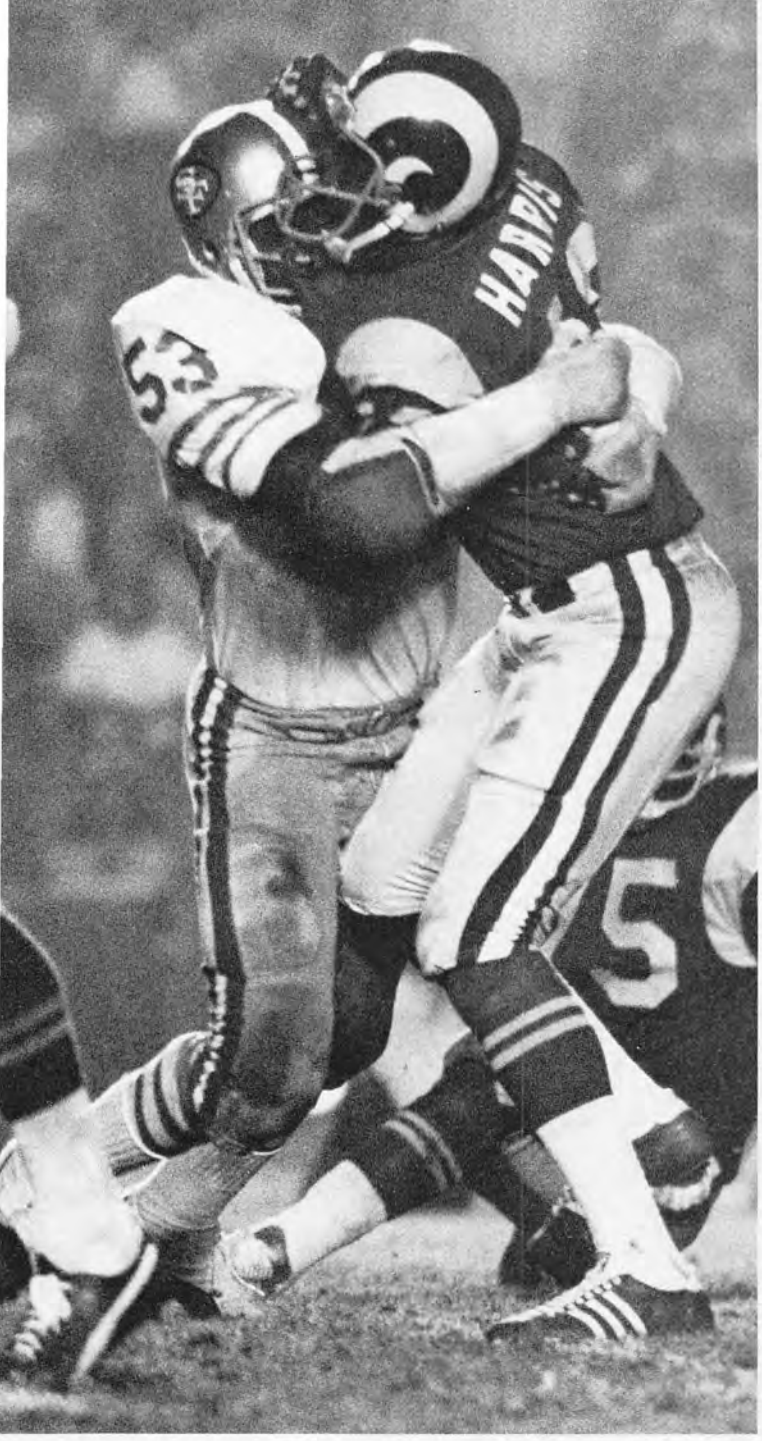
43



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Oakland regrouped, Pittsburgh collapsed, James Harris thought the sky was falling, the Patriots' bubble burst, and the Chiefs razzle-dazzled George Allen.

◄ *(Top left) James Harris was sacked a record 10 times by the 49ers, six at the hands of Tommy Hart.*

◄ *(Top right) Matt Blair got up high to block this third-period extra point try by Bears' Bob Thomas. Later Thomas shanked one wide right as the Vikings narrowly won.*

◄ *Wide receiver Frank Grant got behind rookie Kansas City cornerback Tim Collier and scored on this 37-yard pass play from Joe Theismann as Washington took a 24-23 fourth-quarter lead. But, despite Grant's eight catches for 138 yards, the Chiefs came back to win, using the old flea flicker play.*

▲ *Ken Burrough caught this pass despite heavy coverage from Denver's John Rowser and Calvin Jones. Burrough caught five for 107 yards as Houston won 17-3.*

► *Linebacker Harry Carson stopped Dallas' Doug Dennison here. The Cowboys won.*

Numbers

Standings

AFC East	W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP
Baltimore	4	1	0	.800	152	101
New England	3	2	0	.600	131	115
Buffalo	2	3	0	.400	102	86
Miami	2	3	0	.400	102	110
N.Y. Jets	1	4	0	.200	43	131
AFC Central						
Cincinnati	4	1	0	.800	138	66
Houston	4	1	0	.800	94	46
Cleveland	2	3	0	.400	107	153
Pittsburgh	1	4	0	.200	108	110
AFC West						
Oakland	4	1	0	.800	113	127
Denver	3	2	0	.600	126	50
San Diego	3	2	0	.600	113	93
Kansas City	1	4	0	.200	104	161
Tampa Bay	0	5	0	.000	26	120
NFC East	**W**	**L**	**T**	**Pct.**	**Pts.**	**OP**
Dallas	5	0	0	1.000	133	67
St. Louis	4	1	0	.800	143	102
Washington	3	2	0	.600	107	107
Philadelphia	2	3	0	.400	72	100
N.Y. Giants	0	5	0	.000	69	114
NFC Central						
Minnesota	4	0	1	.900	97	53
Chicago	3	2	0	.600	81	52
Detroit	2	3	0	.400	80	64
Green Bay	2	3	0	.400	72	117
NFC West						
San Francsico	4	1	0	.800	108	60
Los Angeles	3	1	1	.700	95	78
New Orleans	2	3	0	.400	98	112
Atlanta	1	4	0	.200	47	98
Seattle	0	5	0	.000	85	153

Scores

American Football Conference

New York Jets 17, Buffalo 14
Houston 17, Denver 3
Baltimore 28, Miami 14
Oakland 27, San Diego 17
Cleveland 18, Pittsburgh 16
Cincinnati 21, Tampa Bay 0

National Football Conference

New Orleans 30, Atlanta 0
Minnesota 20, Chicago 19
Dallas 24, New York Giants 14
St. Louis 33, Philadelphia 14
Green Bay 27, Seattle 20
San Francisco 16, Los Angeles 0

Interconference Games

Kansas City 33, Washington 30
Detroit 30, New England 10
NFC, 6 victories; AFC, 4 victories

Newsmakers

O.J. Simpson gained 53 yards for Buffalo against the New York Jets, giving him a career total of 8,411 for eight seasons, third highest in the 57-year history of the NFL. Simpson needs 187 yards to move ahead of **Jim Taylor** into the number two spot.

Detroit's **Greg Landry** made Tommy Hudspeth's first game as head coach easier by completing 15 of 18 passes for 146 yards and three touchdowns. Washington's **Joe Theismann** had his best day in the NFL—270 yards and two touchdowns.

Cliff Branch wasn't the only Oakland receiver troubling San Diego. Tight end **Dave Casper** caught seven passes for 104 yards.

Week 6

The Sixth Week, October 17, 1976

▶ *The Cardinals got just 90 yards rushing, 33 by Steve Jones (34), but continued to prove you don't have to run to win. Jim Hart's accurate arm provided the margin of victory over Dallas in this important game as the Cardinals hung on to win 21-17.*

People

Ron Jaworski
Los Angeles
Jaworski had not played since the Rams' opening game in Atlanta, where he was sidelined with a shoulder injury. When starting quarterback Pat Haden was injured in the first quarter, Jaworski came off the bench. He drove the Rams to a 20-12 win.

Bo Matthews
San Diego
Matthews had his best day as a professional, scoring the winning touchdown in a 30-27 victory over Houston and running 42 yards for another score. That was the longest run for Matthews in his three seasons with the Chargers, who have doubled their 1975 victories.

Walter Payton
Chicago
Payton's 17-yard touchdown run gave the Bears a 12-10 lead over Los Angeles in the third quarter. He gained a total of 145 yards in 27 carries. Payton's season totals include 694 yards rushing in 140 carries. He leads the league in rushing.

Greg Pruitt
Cleveland
Pruitt rushed for 191 yards in 26 carries and scored two touchdowns. He set up another touchdown with a 64-yard run as the Browns defeated Atlanta 20-17 and evened their record at 3-3. It is the first time Cleveland has been at .500 this late in the season since 1973.

Jan Stenerud
Kansas City
Stenerud said he was anticipating a victory but thinking about a 1971 loss when he kicked a 34-yard field goal to beat Maimi in overtime. Stenerud missed a 31-yard field goal against Miami in 1971 in a game the Dolphins went on to win in the longest overtime.

Gene Washington
San Francisco
When Washington teamed with quarterback Jim Plunkett for a 55-yard touchdown pass against New Orleans, he set a 49ers' record with 5,817 yards on receptions. Billy Wilson held the record of 5,802. Earlier, Washington had broken Wilson's TD record.

Reflections

The lead column in *Official Dallas Cowboys Weekly* is called "Ask Tex Schramm." The president and general manager of the Cowboys entertains written questions from the newspaper's subscribers, three of whom wondered last week whether the Cowboys would be seen in their dark blue game jerseys this season. Dallas usually wears white, at home and on the road. Schramm's answer: "The one and only time the Cowboys will wear blue jerseys this year will be next Sunday in St. Louis. The home team has the option of naming the color jerseys they will wear and though the Cardinals traditionally wear red at home, in recent years they have elected to wear white jerseys for two or three selected games. In each case, they have selected the Cowboys game and, just as coincidentally, when we have worn our blue jerseys there the last two years, we have lost. Therefore, there is little doubt why we are wearing blue again. . . ."

The Cowboys lost again in St. Louis this week 21-17. It was their first defeat after five victories and it left the NFL without an unbeaten and untied team through six weeks of play for the first time since 1971 (Minnesota is 5-0-1). But Schramm, while understandably upset, wasn't blaming the defeat on the color of Dallas's uniform. The Cowboys' receivers simply dropped too many important passes, while St. Louis's receivers caught the ones that were thrown at them all day. Cardinals quarterback Jim Hart completed 22 of 33 passes for 346 yards and three touchdowns. Dallas's Roger Staubach wasn't bad, either. He was on target 21 of 42 times for 250 yards and two touchdowns. But Staubach had four other possible touchdown passes dropped or called back because of a penalty. With three seconds left in the game, Staubach threw from his 21-yard line to tight end Billy Joe DuPree in the end zone. The ball tipped off DuPree's hands, the Cardinals' victory was saved, and St. Louis moved into a tie with Dallas for the NFC East lead. Staubach has had few such frustrations in an otherwise remarkable season. He came into the game with a whopping 73.5 pass-completion percentage and his overall quarterback "rating" was 121.0.

The Dallas-St. Louis game was the most important of the week from the standpoint of possible playoff positions in December, but there was another game in Tampa that was just as important in its own way. Seattle defeated Tampa Bay 13-10 in Expansion Bowl I, the first meeting between the new teams that joined the NFL this year. Tampa Bay and Seattle were so evenly matched that the game almost went into overtime. Linebacker Mike Curtis blocked Dave Green's 35-yard field goal attempt with 42 seconds left in regulation play to insure the Seahawks' victory. Curtis, a grizzled war-horse who played with distinction and gusto for 11 seasons with Baltimore, could not remember making a contribution to victory in this manner. "A lineman missed his block and I caught the ball shoulder high with my hand," said Curtis. Despite advancing years and his position on an expansion team, Curtis still comes to play. "I would have hated to go home without winning this one," he said. The Seahawks' victory leaves only two teams winless—Tampa Bay and the New York Giants. Each has an 0-6 record.

Are the Steelers Back?

Pittsburgh hasn't met with the adversity that has befallen the Giants and Tampa Bay, but when the Steelers lost three straight and tumbled into last place in the AFC Central, it represented one of the most startling reverses in several years. This was the team that won Super Bowls IX and X. The situation before the Steelers' game with Cincinnati was critical. Quarterback Terry Bradshaw was sidelined with an injury and rookie Mike Kruczek had to lead the Steelers in a game they could not lose without almost certainly forfeiting their chances of getting into the playoffs. Kruczek did a very smart thing, however. He gave the ball to Franco Harris . . . and the Steelers' defense did the rest. The result was a 23-6 victory. Harris's 41 carries broke the NFL record set by Baltimore's Lydell Mitchell in 1974. Franco also gained 143 yards, breaking John Henry Johnson's club record for most yards gained in a career. Harris has rushed for 4,485 yards in just under four and one-half seasons. "It was a lot of work," he admitted, "but I'll carry fifty times if necessary." Pittsburgh now has a 2-4 record. Cincinnati and Houston are 4-2 and Cleveland is 3-3. Those are the teams the Steelers have to beat in the AFC Central; there are five other teams in the AFC with better records in the possible race for a wild-card berth in the playoffs. "The Super Bowl," said Steelers' Coach Chuck Noll, "is fifty million miles away."

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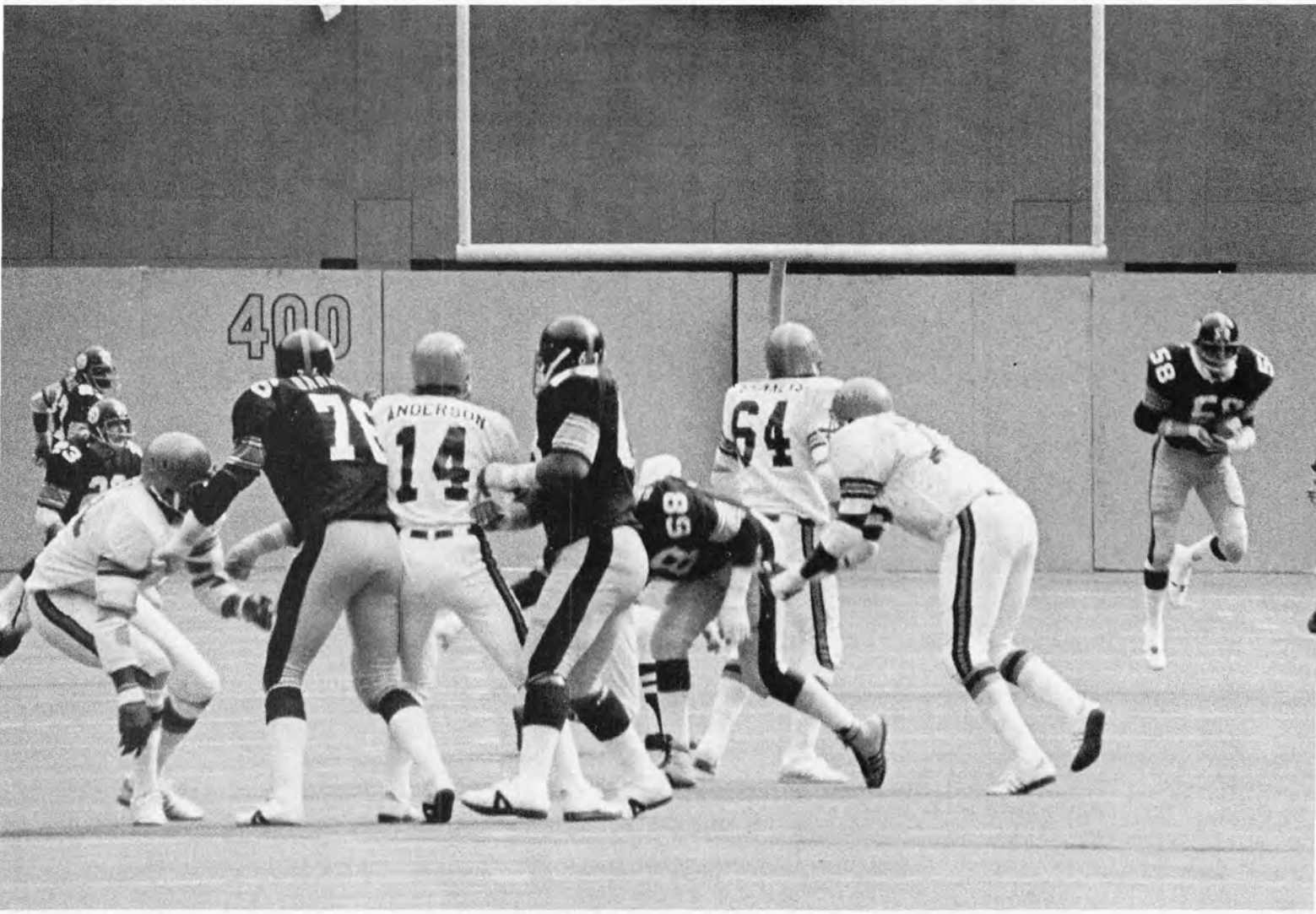
The Steelers finally ended a three-game losing streak, San Diego made a race of it in the AFC West, and Baltimore remained ahead of New England.



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◀ *(Top) With a 1-4 record and a must game against Cincinnati, Pittsburgh was on the spot. It was 3-3 in the second quarter when Ken Anderson's pass was picked off by Pittsburgh's Jack Lambert. His 22-yard return to the Bengals' 38 set up a touchdown and started a nine-game winning streak.*

◀ *(Left) Atlanta's Claude Humphrey sacked the Browns' Brian Sipe twice for 23 yards lost. Here Humphrey grabbed Sipe's jersey and spun him around. Later in a fourth-quarter ball possession drive, Sipe scrambled twice for 20 yards.*

▲ *San Diego's Bo Matthews gained 59 yards on six carries against Houston, and 42 came on one breakaway scamper.*

▲ *(Top) Tampa Bay running back Louis Carter dives backward over the line in the first "Expansion Bowl." Seattle won when Mike Curtis blocked a field goal with 42 seconds to play.*

▲ *The Rams' Ron Jaworski, who had separated his shoulder in the first week, got his chance to play against Chicago after Pat Haden and James Harris were hurt. Here he fakes to Lawrence McCutcheon and fades to pass.*

Numbers

Standings

AFC East	W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP
Baltimore	5	1	0	.833	183	114
New England	4	2	0	.667	172	122
Buffalo	2	4	0	.333	115	117
Miami	2	4	0	.333	119	130
N.Y. Jets	1	5	0	.167	50	172
AFC Central						
Cincinnati	4	2	0	.667	144	89
Houston	4	2	0	.667	121	76
Cleveland	3	3	0	.500	127	170
Pittsburgh	2	4	0	.333	131	116
AFC West						
Oakland	5	1	0	.833	130	137
San Diego	4	2	0	.667	143	120
Denver	3	3	0	.500	136	67
Kansas City	2	4	0	.333	124	178
Tampa Bay	0	6	0	.000	36	133
NFC East	**W**	**L**	**T**	**Pct.**	**Pts.**	**OP**
Dallas	5	1	0	.833	150	88
St. Louis	5	1	0	.833	164	119
Washington	4	2	0	.667	127	114
Philadelphia	2	4	0	.333	85	128
N.Y. Giants	0	6	0	.000	76	138
NFC Central						
Minnesota	5	0	1	.917	121	60
Chicago	3	3	0	.500	93	72
Green Bay	3	3	0	.500	100	130
Detroit	2	4	0	.333	87	84
NFC West						
San Francisco	5	1	0	.833	141	63
Los Angeles	4	1	1	.750	115	90
New Orleans	2	4	0	.333	101	145
Atlanta	1	5	0	.167	64	118
Seattle	1	5	0	.167	98	163

Scores

American Football Conference
Baltimore 31, Buffalo 13
Pittsburgh 23, Cincinnati 6
San Diego 30, Houston 27
Kansas City 20, Miami 17, overtime
Oakland 17, Denver 10
New England 41, New York Jets 7

National Football Conference
Los Angeles 20, Chicago 12
St. Louis 21, Dallas 17
Washington 20, Detroit 7
San Francisco 33, New Orleans 3
Minnesota 24, New York Giants 7
Green Bay 28, Philadelphia 13

Interconference Games
Seattle 13, Tampa Bay 10
Cleveland 20, Atlanta 17
NFC 7 victories; AFC 5 victories

Newsmakers

Norm Bulaich of Miami gained 91 yards in 20 carries and scored a touchdown.

Houston's **Dan Pastorini** out-passed San Diego's **Dan Fouts,** completing 25 of 39 attempts for 329 yards and three touchdowns to Fouts's 279 yards and two touchdowns. But Fouts had 171 yards and a touchdown in the fourth quarter of the Chargers' victory over Houston. Miami's **Bob Griese** threw for 306 yards and one touchdown.

Howard Twilley of Miami and **Chuck Foreman** of Minnesota each caught eight passes and scored a touchdown. St. Louis's **Mel Gray** caught seven that went for 152 yards and two scores.

Week 7

The Seventh Week, October 24, 1976

▶ *From the appearance of St. Louis rookie defensive tackle Mike Dawson, you can tell a number of things: (1) Washington plays on natural turf; (2) it rained October 25 in Washington, and (3) Dawson didn't like it very much. The Redskins won 20-10.*

People

Lem Barney
Detroit
The Lions intercepted six of Seattle quarterback Jim Zorn's passes and returned two for touchdowns. Barney's 24-yard interception return was his seventh for a touchdown, tying him with Erich Barnes and Herb Adderley on the all-time list behind Ken Houston's 9.

Larry Brooks
Los Angeles
"Larry played what you would call a complete defensive game," said Rams coach Chuck Knox after Brooks recovered a fumble to set up Los Angeles's first touchdown, sacked New Orleans quarterbacks three times, and made nine tackles.

Roger Carr
Baltimore
Carr caught five passes for 210 yards and two touchdowns, enhancing his reputation as one of the NFL's most dangerous deep passing threats. Carr has averaged 32.6 yards and scored six touchdowns on 18 catches this year. His career average is 24.3.

Morris Owens
Tampa Bay
Owens signed with the Buccaneers after he was released by Miami a month earlier. When Tampa Bay played Miami this week, Owens caught touchdown passes of 18, 20, and 7 yards in the Buccaneers' 23-20 loss. The Bucs had scored once through the air.

Brian Sipe
Cleveland
Sipe enjoyed his best day in four years with the Browns, completing 23 of 28 passes for 246 yards and two touchdowns against San Diego. Sipe's 10-yard pass to Oscar Roan in the fourth quarter provided the Browns with a 21-17 victory.

Fran Tarkenton
Minnesota
It was a routine day for Tarkenton—249 yards passing and two touchdowns—except he became the second man to reach 40,000 yards passing in a career. He now has 40,149 for 15-plus seasons and needs 91 more yards to catch leader John Unitas.

Reflections

After the Washington Redskins sloshed past the St. Louis Cardinals 20-10 in a Monday night game that was played under monsoon conditions, Redskins Coach George Allen said, "We adapted to the field while St. Louis let it bother them. Whether it's rain, snow, or mud, it's Redskins weather."

It's also still a Redskins' season. Allen's veterans have a 5-2 record, which ties them with St. Louis, a game behind Dallas in the NFC East at the midpoint of the schedule. Before the kickoff with the Cardinals, Allen admitted that a Washington defeat probably would knock his team from contention. "This is a championship game," said Allen, although it should be noted that he also has been known to attach cosmic importance to rookie scrimmages in training camp.

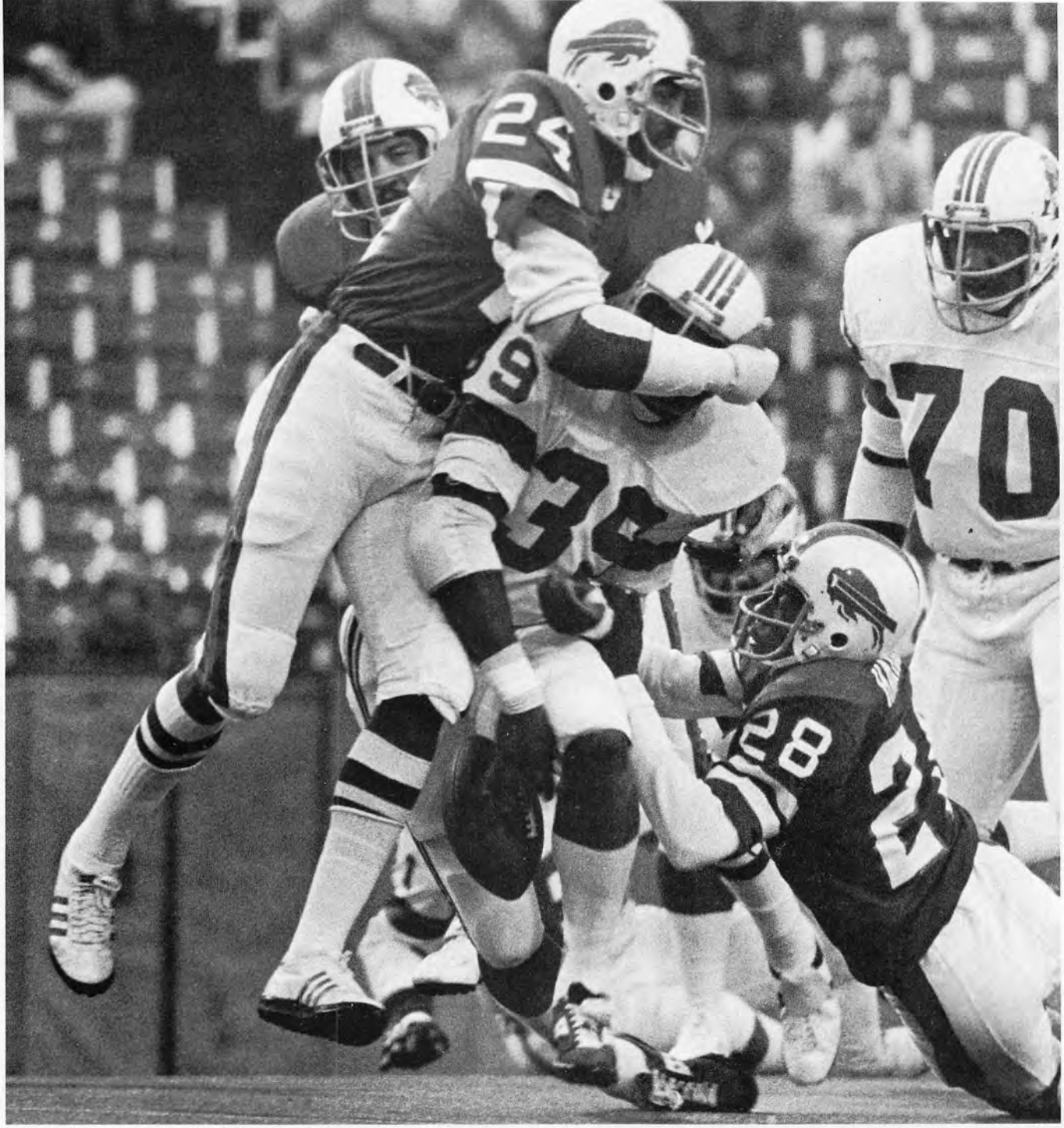
Neither the Redskins nor Cardinals played like champions, but Washington got the job done in the bog that served as the playing field in Robert F. Kennedy Stadium. Redskins quarterbacks Joe Theismann and Billy Kilmer were sacked eight times . . . but the Redskins recovered eight St. Louis fumbles, an NFL record. "I've never played under worse conditions," said Cardinals quarterback Jim Hart. "But what are you going to do, postpone the game and play on Tuesday?"

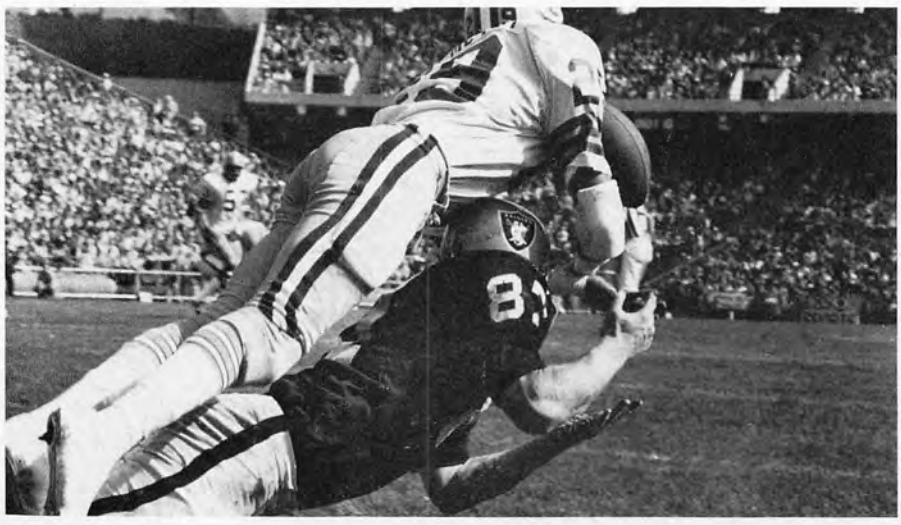
The Cardinals led 10-6 early in the fourth quarter when Terry Metcalf fumbled on his 7-yard line. Washington's Dennis Johnson recovered, and Mike Thomas scored a touchdown on the next play to put Washington ahead 13-10. St. Louis punted on its next possession and Eddie Brown weaved and waded through the slop 71 yards with the punt return to increase the Redskins' advantage to 20-10. St. Louis had another bid, but Metcalf fumbled after catching a pass on the goal line with a little less than two minutes remaining. Washington recovered and ran out the clock.

The San Francisco 49ers found themselves in a much more relaxed position than the Cardinals and Redskins. After defeating Atlanta 15-0, the 49ers reached the halfway juncture with a 6-1 record, their best since 1959 when first-year head coach Monte Clark was a rookie tackle. Clark was traded to Cleveland a couple years later and moved to Miami in 1970 to begin his coaching career. He did such a job with the Dolphins' offensive line that his name soon became mentioned with virtually every head coaching position that opened. Clark got his chance in San Francisco and he has come up with another powerful line . . . on defense. The front four of Cedrick Hardman, Tommy Hart, Cleveland Elam, and Jimmy Webb sacked Atlanta quarterback Kim McQuilken eight times, running its season total to 37 (32 in the last four games). The 49ers have given up a total of only nine points in those four games and have not allowed a touchdown in the last three. The NFL record for sacks is 67, set by the Oakland Raiders in 1967. The 49ers are three ahead of the Raiders' pace and their success has unleashed an outpouring of nicknames. The favorite seems to be the Gold Rush, which has interesting generic connotations and seems at least as fitting as Fearsome Foursome (Los Angeles Rams), Purple People Eaters (Minnesota Vikings), and the Steel Curtain (Pittsburgh Steelers). Across the San Francisco Bay in Oakland they're calling the Raiders' offensive line the Stablerizers, a tribute to the blockers who protect quarterback Ken Stabler. But while Stabler threw for three touchdowns in an 18-14 victory over Green Bay that gave Oakland a 6-1 record, the emergence of Green Bay quarterback Lynn Dickey couldn't be ignored.

A Slow Start

Dickey came to the Packers in an off-season trade with Houston. After three games the Packers were winless. Dickey had not thrown a touchdown pass, had less than 300 yards passing and was averaging under four yards gained for each of 82 passes. Dickey threw for only 11 yards the next week, but one of his completions went for a touchdown that was the winning margin in a 24-14 victory over Detroit. The next week he threw for 215 yards and a touchdown in a victory over Seattle. The following week he threw for 226 yards and two touchdowns in another Packers win. This week he outpassed Stabler in defeat, throwing for 303 yards and a touchdown. Dickey is in his sixth year as a professional but he threw only 294 passes in five seasons as Dan Pastorini's backup in Houston. "He's going to be a fine quarterback," says Packers coach Bart Starr, who has been patient. He stuck with Dickey after a minus-35-yard passing performance in the third week at Cincinnati. The total was the third lowest in league history, but a stunned Starr shook it off. "I'm glad it's not the worst," he said, managing a pained smile.





▲ *The Bills' Doug Jones (24) and Dwight Harrison (28) forced Sam Cunningham to fumble, but tackle Leon Gray (70) saved the day by recovering the bobble for New England.*

◀ *Oakland's tight end Dave Casper led the AFC in receiving with 34 catches after six weeks, but tenacious defense such as this by the Packers' Mike C. McCoy held Casper to just one catch.*

▶ *(Top) Steelers' linebacker Loren Toews tackled Giants' tight end Bob Tucker, even though some thought Toews tried to unsnap the chin strap.*

▶ *(Far right) Rick Upchurch's record fourth punt return touchdown covered 55 yards and thrilled John Ralston.*

▶ *A bright spot for winless Tampa Bay was Dewey Selmon, who sacked Bob Griese.*

Is San Francisco for real? Is rain really Redskins' weather? Will the Vikings ever be stopped? Will the Giants and Tampa Bay win? Is the season already half over?

Numbers

Standings

AFC East	W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP
Baltimore	6	1	0	.857	203	114
New England	5	2	0	.714	198	144
Miami	3	4	0	.429	142	150
Buffalo	2	5	0	.286	137	143
N.Y. Jets	1	6	0	.143	50	192
AFC Central						
Cincinnati	5	2	0	.714	171	96
Cleveland	4	3	0	.571	148	187
Houston	4	3	0	.571	128	103
Pittsburgh	3	4	0	.429	158	116
AFC West						
Oakland	6	1	0	.857	148	151
Denver	4	3	0	.571	171	93
San Diego	4	3	0	.571	160	141
Kansas City	2	5	0	.286	150	213
Tampa Bay	0	7	0	.000	56	156
NFC East	**W**	**L**	**T**	**Pct.**	**Pts.**	**OP**
Dallas	6	1	0	.857	181	109
St. Louis	5	2	0	.714	174	139
Washington	5	2	0	.714	147	124
Philadelphia	2	5	0	.286	97	159
N.Y. Giants	0	7	0	.000	76	165
NFC Central						
Minnesota	6	0	1	.929	152	72
Chicago	3	4	0	.429	114	103
Detroit	3	4	0	.429	128	98
Green Bay	3	4	0	.429	114	148
NFC West						
San Francisco	6	1	0	.857	156	63
Los Angeles	5	1	1	.786	131	100
New Orleans	2	5	0	.286	111	161
Atlanta	1	6	0	.143	64	133
Seattle	1	6	0	.143	112	204

Scores

American Football Conference
Baltimore 20, New York Jets 0
Cincinnati 27, Houston 7
Denver 35, Kansas City 26
Miami 23, Tampa Bay 20
New England 26, Buffalo 22
Cleveland 21, San Diego 17

National Football Conference
San Francisco 15, Atlanta 0
Dallas 31, Chicago 21
Detroit 41, Seattle 14
Los Angeles 16, New Orleans 10
Minnesota 31, Philadelphia 12
Washington 20, St. Louis 10

Interconference Games
Oakland 18, Green Bay 14
Pittsburgh 27, New York Giants 0
AFC, 7 victories; NFC, 7 victories.

Newsmakers

Minnesota's **Chuck Foreman** rushed for 200 yards in 28 carries. He became the nineteenth player to rush for at least 200 yards, a feat that has been achieved 25 times in the 57-year history of the NFL. **O.J. Simpson,** who has done it four times, gained 110 yards this week to give him a career total of 8,609. Simpson moved past **Jim Taylor** (8,597) into second place behind **Jim Brown** (12,312).

Detroit's **Greg Landry** passed for three touchdowns and completed 18 of 27 passes for 233 yards.

Cleveland's **Larry Poole,** Seattle's **Sherman Smith,** Kansas City's **MacArthur Lane,** and New Orleans's **Tony Galbreath** caught seven passes.

Week 8

The Eighth Week, October 31, 1976

▶ *Denver's Steve Ramsey can attest to the fact that the three-four defense can be tough on a quarterback. He suffered 10 sacks for 62 yards in losses against the Raiders, seven of the sacks coming in the first half. Ted Hendricks got this one.*

People

Bill Arnsparger
Miami
Arnsparger was the architect of the "No Name Defense" that helped Miami win Super Bowls VII and VIII. He rejoined the Dolphins this week after being released as the New York coach. Miami came up with its best defensive effort of 1976.

Isaac Curtis
Cincinnati
The Browns would just as soon see Curtis out of the league. Curtis caught six passes, including a 69-yard touchdown, in the Bengals' win over the Browns. In eight games over four seasons, Curtis has caught 17 touchdown passes against Cleveland.

Reggie Harrison
Pittsburgh
When Franco Harris was unable to start the third quarter because of muscle cramps, Harrison came in and ignited a Steelers' team that scored 20 points in the fourth quarter of a 23-0 victory over San Diego. He gained 108 yards in 13 carries.

Scott Hunter
Atlanta
Hunter had not thrown a pass in an NFL game since 1973 when he was summoned from the bench in the second half against New Orleans. He completed 10 of 11 passes for 138 yards and two touchdowns as Atlanta overcame a 14-0 deficit.

Ray Jarvis
Detroit
Jarvis caught scoring passes of 74 and 13 yards from Greg Landry and finished the day with 163 yards on six receptions. It was the best day of Jarvis's six-season career. The 74-yard touchdown represented the longest by a pass for Detroit since 1973.

Richard Todd
New York Jets
Todd made the first start of his pro career, replacing the injured Joe Namath. He threw a touchdown pass to David Knight and went all the way at quarterback as the Jets defeated Buffalo. Both of coach Lou Holtz's two NFL victories have been over the Bills.

Reflections

The Baltimore Colts had not been on Monday night television since they defeated New England 24-17 in the eighth week of the 1972 season and four years to the week later they were primed to show people what had happened to them. The Colts defeated Houston 38-14 for their sixteenth victory in the last 17 regular season games. They were beaten 30-27 by Dallas in the second week of the regular season this year and they were knocked off by Pittsburgh 28-10 in the AFC playoffs last year. In between those setbacks, Baltimore has been gathering support as perhaps the best team in football. "Now I know how those rebels felt when they marched up North," said O.A. (Bum) Phillips, the tobacco-chewing cowboy who coaches the Oilers. While Phillips sought a historical perspective in explaining the defeat, the Colts' Lydell Mitchell was reacting to the moment. "It used to be that I wasn't sure of myself in comparison to other backs," he said. "Now I consider myself number one."

Mitchell rushed for 136 yards in 28 carries and looped out of the backfield to catch seven passes for 46 yards. A good night's work, but Mitchell can marshal other statistics to back up his assertion of being number one. He has rushed for 796 yards, second highest total in the league behind the 802 of Chicago's Walter Payton; he's tied for seventh with 31 pass receptions; and he is far ahead of the pack with 191 carries. That is an average of just under 24 a game.

If Mitchell maintains that pace he will finish the season with 334 carries. O.J. Simpson set the record with 332 in 1975. Mitchell is not as big or as fast as Simpson, but he gets maximum output from his 5-foot 10½-inch (5-11 with his toupee), 190-pound body. "In a game like this," he added, referring to the glitter of Monday night, "just wire me up, let me out there, and I'm ready."

Are the Colts the best team in football? Folks in Dallas would argue that. Perhaps it is more accurate to say the Colts are the best team in the AFC. For most of this decade the AFC has been a conference dominated by Pittsburgh, Miami, Oakland, and Cincinnati. Pittsburgh and Miami seem to be recovering from early season problems but both teams have 4-4 records. Oakland is a "struggling" 7-1, having remained upright despite numerous injuries. Cincinnati is Cincinnati . . . which is to say the Bengals are as reliable as the Ohio River that flows past their stadium. But as the season heads into its ninth week, five weeks from the finish, the Colts seem to be leading this horserace.

The picture in the NFC is not as clear. Dallas beat old rival Washington 20-7 this week to remain a game ahead of St. Louis in the NFC East. The Cardinals beat San Francisco 23-20 in overtime. By losing, the 49ers gave up first place in the West to Los Angeles. The Rams are 6-1-1, San Francisco 6-2.

Losing to a good team such as St. Louis is one thing, but 49ers coach Monte Clark found the loss difficult to accept for other reasons. On the opening kickoff, San Francisco's two deep men apparently became confused. Both rushed forward to block and, with no one back to receive the kick, the ball bounced free on the 49ers' 8-yard line. St. Louis recovered and went on to score a touchdown. Then, in the overtime, Anthony Leonard, who was involved in the earlier mixup, fumbled a punt. Steve Jones recovered for the Cardinals on San Francisco's 42. Cardinals fullback Jim Otis ran the ball six consecutive times for 38 yards, setting up Jim Bakken's game-winning field goal. "We gave them seven points," said Clark, "That was the ball game."

The New Bears

The Minnesota Vikings experienced similar travails when they played Chicago. The Bears, who lost 20-19 after trailing 17-0 at halftime in their first game with the Vikings this year, capitalized on two short punts by the Vikings' Neil Clabo. Walter Payton ran 39 yards for a Chicago touchdown after a 15-yard Clabo punt. Johnny Musso scored from three yards for the winning touchdown in a 14-13 victory after a 16-yard Clabo punt to the Minnesota 32. It was the Vikings' first loss of the season.

The Bears, who are 4-4 despite a schedule that has included Dallas, Los Angeles, Washington, San Francisco, and two games with the Vikings, are off to their best start since they won five of their first eight in 1971. "Now the Vikings have lost one like everyone else in the league," said Bears coach Jack Pardee. "We weren't in awe of this club."

Minnesota's long reign in the NFC Central is by no means over, but Chicago appears to be a future problem the Vikings will not be able to ignore. The Bears might become the "Baltimore" of the NFC in 1977.

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RAMSEY
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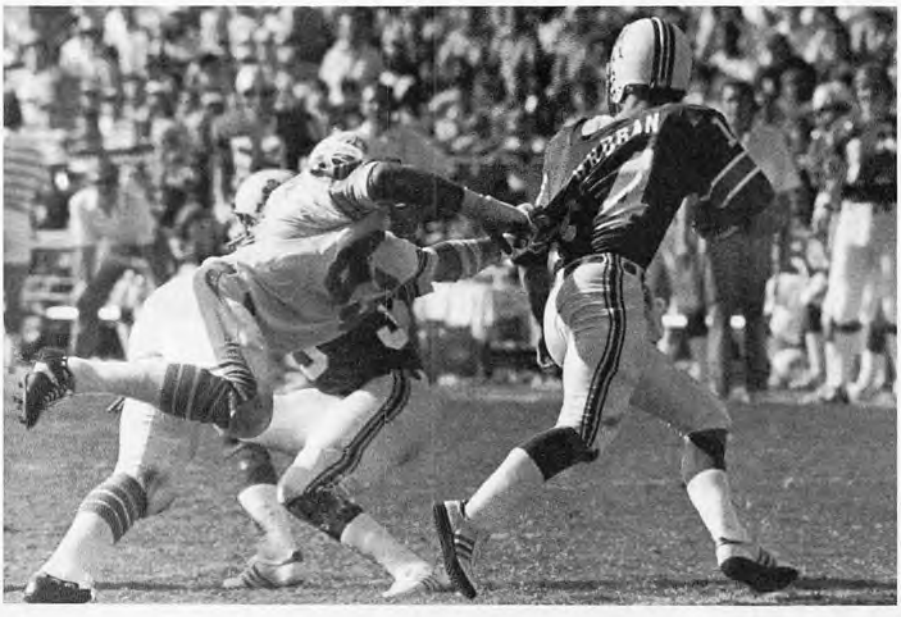


▲ *Some people think sacking the quarterback is a laughing matter. Ernie Holmes did after he and L.C. Greenwood congratulated each other on their sack of Chargers' quarterback Dan Fouts.*

◀ *Steve Grogan rushed for a record 12 touchdowns in 1976, but he got none against an aroused Miami defense that scored a stunning 10-3 upset over the Patriots. Here Vern Den Herder pulled Grogan's jersey out of shape.*

▶ *(Top) A stern Dallas defense, which included good pass coverage like Charlie Waters on Jean Fugett, helped the Cowboys hold Washington scoreless until 48 seconds remained in the game.*

▶ *(Far right) San Francisco led 13-7 until Jim Hart passed to Terry Metcalf for the go-ahead touchdown. Then Metcalf made like a real Cardinal, flapping his wings in exultation.*

▶ *Walter Payton outran his own blockers as the Bears surprised the Vikings.*

Bert Jones, Lydell Mitchell and friends showed Houston where the exit was, the Vikings lost, the Giants didn't, the 49ers slipped, the Cardinals rebounded.

Numbers

Standings

AFC East	W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP
Baltimore	7	1	0	.875	241	128
New England	5	3	0	.625	201	154
Miami	4	4	0	.500	152	153
Buffalo	2	6	0	.250	151	162
N.Y. Jets	2	6	0	.250	69	206
AFC Central						
Cincinnati	6	2	0	.750	192	102
Cleveland	4	4	0	.500	154	208
Houston	4	4	0	.500	142	141
Pittsburgh	4	4	0	.500	181	116
AFC West						
Oakland	7	1	0	.875	167	157
Denver	4	4	0	.500	177	112
San Diego	4	4	0	.500	160	164
Kansas City	3	5	0	.375	178	232
Tampa Bay	0	8	0	.000	75	184
NFC East	**W**	**L**	**T**	**Pct.**	**Pts.**	**OP**
Dallas	7	1	0	.875	201	116
St. Louis	6	2	0	.750	197	159
Washington	5	3	0	.625	154	144
Philadelphia	3	5	0	.375	107	159
N.Y. Giants	0	8	0	.000	76	175
NFC Central						
Minnesota	6	1	1	.813	165	86
Chicago	4	4	0	.500	128	116
Detroit	4	4	0	.500	155	104
Green Bay	3	5	0	.375	120	175
NFC West						
Los Angeles	6	1	1	.813	176	106
San Francisco	6	2	0	.750	176	86
Atlanta	2	6	0	.250	87	153
New Orleans	2	6	0	.250	131	184
Seattle	1	7	0	.125	118	249

Scores

American Football Conference
Cincinnati 21, Cleveland 6
Oakland 19, Denver 6
Kansas City 28, Tampa Bay 19
Miami 10, New England 3
New York Jets 19, Buffalo 14
Pittsburgh 23, San Diego 0
Baltimore 38, Houston 14

National Football Conference
Dallas 20, Washington 7
Detroit 27, Green Bay 6
Chicago 14, Minnesota 13
Atlanta 23, New Orleans 20
Philadelphia 10, New York Giants 0
St. Louis 23, San Francisco 20, overtime
Los Angeles 45, Seattle 6

Newsmakers

Buffalo's **O.J. Simpson** is making up for a slow start. He had 166 yards in 29 carries, giving him 652 for the season and putting him within reach of his fifth 1,000-yard year in eight seasons. **Delvin Williams** of San Francisco had the best day of his career—194 yards in 34 carries and three touchdowns.

St. Louis's **Jim Hart** threw for 271 yards and three touchdowns. **Fran Tarkenton's** 272 yards passing gave the Minnesota quarterback a career total of 40,421, surpassing the all-time record of 40,239 by **John Unitas.**

Mel Gray of St. Louis caught only three passes, but one went for a 77-yard touchdown and his total of 115 yards gave him a 38.3-yard average. Oakland's **Cliff Branch** had three for 103 yards.

Week 9

The Ninth Week, November 7, 1976

▶ *O.J. Simpson, the mild-mannered car rental fellow who dashes through airports, cut his head when tackled by New England's Mel Lunsford. O.J. came up swinging and he was ejected after gaining just eight yards. He had to watch the Bills lose.*

People

Willard Harrell
Green Bay
Harrell ran 32 yards for a first down on the 7, then scored the winning touchdown from the 2 in the Packers' come-from-behind victory over New Orleans. That gave Green Bay a 4-5 record and equalled its total number of 1975 victories.

Mike Haynes
New England
Patriots fans had never seen anything like it. When rookie Haynes, a number one draft choice, returned a punt 89 yards for a touchdown against Buffalo, it was the first time in New England's 17-season history that the Patriots had a punt return touchdown.

Harvey Martin
Dallas
"I feel like a man who has been reprieved," said Cowboys coach Tom Landry after a tough victory over the New York Giants. Martin figured in Landry's pardon, forcing Craig Morton to fumble the ball on a fourth-down play at Dallas's 5 as the game ended.

Steve Okoniewski
St. Louis
With 27 seconds to play, Philadelphia was on the Cardinals' 11-yard line. But the Eagles' Dave Hampton fumbled and Okoniewski recovered on the 16, allowing St. Louis to put away its seventh victory. Five Cardinals' victories have been by a touchdown or less.

Alan Page
Minnesota
When Page deflected a Detroit field goal attempt, it was the twelfth time this season the Vikings have blocked a field goal, extra point, or punt attempt. Defensive tackle Page now has five blocks to his credit this year. "It's a little luck and a lot of timing," he says.

Sherman Smith
Seattle
It was a historic day for the Seahawks. The 30-13 win over Atlanta was the expansion squad's first over an established team, and with 124 yards in 14 carries, Smith became the first Seattle rusher to gain 100 yards. He scored two touchdowns.

Reflections

Greg Pruitt, Joe Theismann, and Ken Stabler were searching for the right words this week.

Running back Pruitt threw an important touchdown pass to Brian Duncan in Cleveland's victory over Houston. "It looked like a crippled bird trying to get to the tree," Pruitt said of his effort.

Theismann ran for a first down on a fake field goal to set up Mark Moseley's winning field goal for Washington at San Francisco. "I headed for the orange stick [first down marker] like a kid heads for a lollypop," said Theismann.

Stabler fumbled the ball in Chicago and the Bears' Roger Stillwell scooped it up and ran 50 yards for an apparent touchdown. But the official had blown the play dead, saving Oakland's one-point victory. "I was as goofy as a pet coon and didn't know what was going on," Stabler said of the incident.

Metaphors were being uttered throughout the NFL quicker than a hot knife going through butter. And after nine rounds of competition, the battle for playoff spots is warming up. In the NFC there are six realistic contenders for four berths. Those teams are Dallas, St. Louis, and Washington in the East; Minnesota in the Central, and Los Angeles and San Francisco in the West. (Chicago would be a seventh possibility if the Bears had fared better in a mine-field schedule that included five straight games with teams that were in the playoffs last season. The Bears won only one of the games, but their 28-27 loss to Oakland this week was typical of their performance against those opponents.) In the AFC there are as many as eight teams that have to be considered. They are Baltimore, New England, and Miami in the East; Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh in the Central, and Oakland and Denver in the West.

Miami, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Denver all have been beaten four times, but it's been that kind of season in the NFL's 28 playpens. Pittsburgh's two-time defending Super Bowl champions are playing their routinely devastating brand of football now (they administered a 45-0 pounding of Kansas City this week), but a month ago the Steelers were 1-4 and just about out of it. The Steelers supposedly cannot afford another slip . . . but who knows? Miami was 2-4 and virtually written off three weeks ago, but the Dolphins gathered themselves and climbed back over .500.

Washington is as feisty as ever. The Redskins threw the NFC playoff picture out of focus with their victory in San Francisco. After losing last week to Dallas, even eternal optimist George Allen admitted that things looked bad. "I know everyone is writing us off and they have some right to," said the Redskins' coach, "but if we win five of our last six games, which we have to do, I think a ten-and-four record will make the playoffs. By beating the Forty-Niners Sunday, we're back in the race. We have to win this game."

And darned if the Redskins didn't against a favored opponent that is making a race of the NFC West with Los Angeles for the first time since 1972. Theismann, who spent three years in Canada and most of his three seasons in Washington as Billy Kilmer's understudy, may have come of age as an NFL quarterback. He completed 20 of 32 passes for 302 yards and three touchdowns.

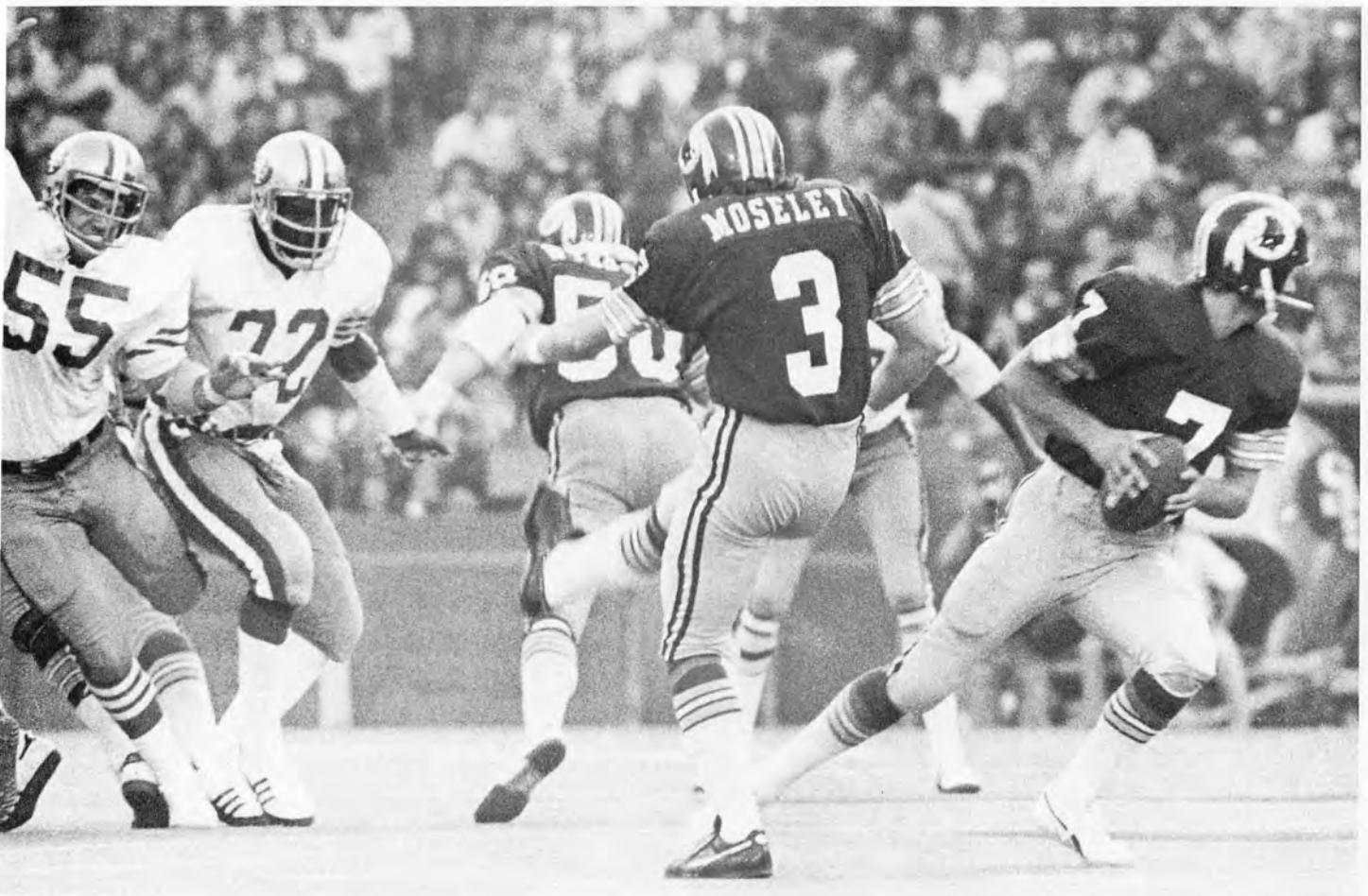
On the drive to the winning field goal, Theismann and the Redskins controlled the ball for 14 plays that consumed more than seven minutes on the scoreboard clock. They began at their 17-yard line after Joe Lavendar intercepted a pass at the goal line. On the tenth play of the series, Theismann came to a fourth-and-three situation at the 49ers' 36. He kneeled to hold the ball for an apparent 53-yard field goal attempt by Moseley. But after taking the snap, Theismann rose and scrambled eight yards for a first down. Moseley eventually kicked a 39-yarder with 1:57 left to win the game. "We'd worked on the fake during the week," said losing coach Monte Clark. "Everybody in the ball park knew what was going to happen."

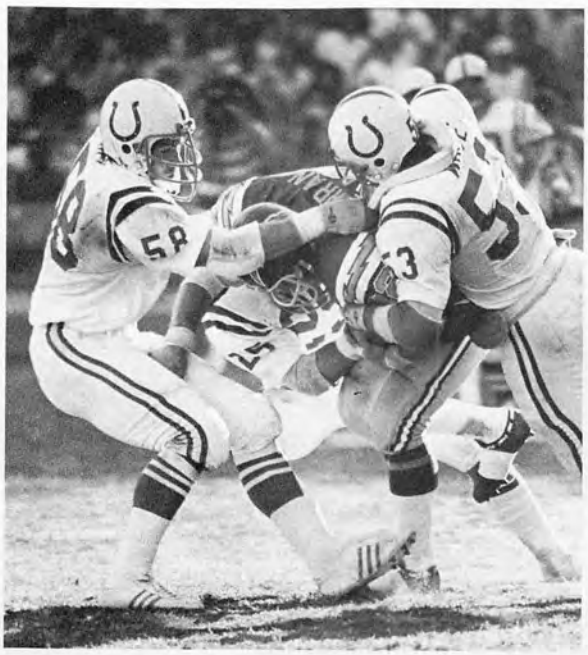
History Making

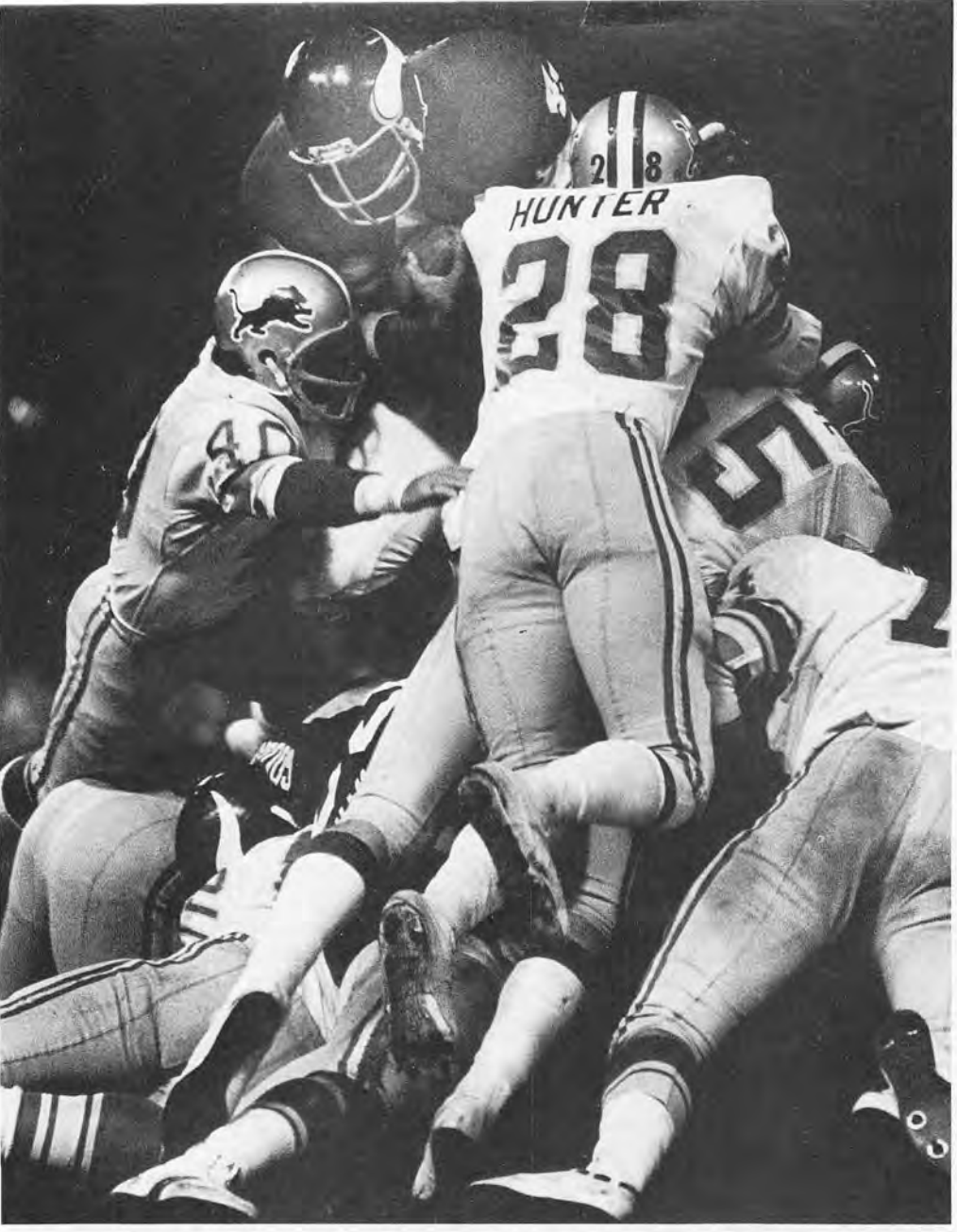
Forty-niners running back Delvin Williams must be wondering what it takes to win. He set a team record with 194 yards rushing in an overtime loss to St. Louis last week and he came back with 180 yards against Washington. Williams scored touchdowns on runs of 80 and 22 yards, and he and Jim Plunkett combined on the longest touchdown pass in team history, 85 yards.

Speaking of history, Pittsburgh made a little, too. The Steelers' shutout was their third in a row, tying them with the 1935 New York Giants and 1970 St. Louis Cardinals for the second longest streak of all time. The Steelers are still a long way from the record. Detroit had seven in a row in 1934.

The Redskins used a trick play to beat the 49ers, the Rams continued to have trouble on Monday night television, and O. J. Simpson lost his cool.







◀ *Mark Moseley went through with his part of the deception by faking this field goal as quarterback Joe Theismann scampered right for eight yards and a first down on fourth down. The play helped set up a real field goal of 39 yards, which Moseley made to win the game.*

◀ *(Near left) Green Bay led New Orleans 30-27 with four minutes to play when the Packers intercepted a Bobby Douglass pass and had the ball at the Saints' 2. But Eric Torkelson fumbled into the end zone, delaying a chance to clinch the victory.*

◀ *(Far left) Colts Darrell Luce (58), Stan White (53), and Ray Oldham (25) stopped the Chargers' tight end Pat Curran after a 12-yard gain.*

▲ *Leading just 17-16, the Vikings sealed the game on the second play of the fourth period when Chuck Foreman went over a pile to score from a yard out.*

▶ *Mark van Eeghen led Oakland as he rushed for 62 yards and caught one Ken Stabler pass for 21 yards.*

Numbers

Standings

AFC East	W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP
Baltimore	8	1	0	.889	278	149
New England	6	3	0	.667	221	164
Miami	5	4	0	.556	179	160
Buffalo	2	7	0	.222	161	182
N.Y. Jets	2	7	0	.222	76	233
AFC Central						
Cincinnati	7	2	0	.778	212	114
Cleveland	5	4	0	.556	175	215
Pittsburgh	5	4	0	.556	226	116
Houston	4	5	0	.444	149	162
AFC West						
Oakland	8	1	0	.889	195	184
Denver	5	4	0	.556	225	125
San Diego	4	5	0	.444	181	201
Kansas City	3	6	0	.333	178	277
Tampa Bay	0	9	0	.000	88	232
NFC East	**W**	**L**	**T**	**Pct.**	**Pts.**	**OP**
Dallas	8	1	0	.889	210	119
St. Louis	7	2	0	.778	214	173
Washington	6	3	0	.667	178	165
Philadelphia	3	6	0	.333	121	176
N.Y. Giants	0	9	0	.000	79	184
NFC Central						
Minnesota	7	1	1	.833	196	109
Chicago	4	5	0	.444	155	144
Detroit	4	5	0	.444	178	135
Green Bay	4	5	0	.444	152	202
NFC West						
Los Angeles	6	2	1	.722	188	126
San Francisco	6	3	0	.667	197	110
Atlanta	2	7	0	.222	100	183
New Orleans	2	7	0	.222	158	216
Seattle	2	7	0	.222	148	262

Scores

American Football Conference
Baltimore 37, San Diego 21
New England 20, Buffalo 10
Cleveland 21, Houston 7
Miami 27, New York Jets 7
Pittsburgh 45, Kansas City 0
Denver 48, Tampa Bay 13

National Football Conference
Seattle 30, Atlanta 13
Minnesota 31, Detroit 23
Green Bay 32, New Orleans 27
Dallas 9, New York Giants 3
St. Louis 17, Philadelphia 14
Washington 24, San Francisco 21

Interconference Games
Oakland 28, Chicago 27
Cincinnati 20, Los Angeles 12
AFC, 9 victories; NFC, 7 victories.

Newsmakers

New England's **Sam Cunningham** gained 141 yards in 25 carries and scored a touchdown to rank second to San Francisco's **Delvin Williams** among NFL runners this week. Eight others had at least 100, including Atlanta's **Sonny Collins,** who did it for the first time, barely. He had 100.

For once **Fran Tarkenton** didn't break anybody else's records. But his 347 yards, on 17 completions in 25 attempts, were a season high for him. He had two touchdown passes.

Washington's **Frank Grant** caught 11 passes for 200 yards. Minnesota's **Sammie White** set a club record with 210 yards on seven catches, two for touchdowns.

Week 10

The Tenth Week, November 14, 1976

▶ *In one of the hardest-hitting and most exciting games of the season, the Cardinals slipped past the Rams 30-28. Here Larry Stallings and Ken Reaves halted the Rams' Lawrence McCutcheon in a not-so-tender manner.*

People

Ron Bolton
Cleveland
Bolton broke open the game in the fourth quarter when he intercepted a pass by Philadelphia's Mike Boryla and ran 37 yards for a touchdown. The Browns won their fifth game in the last six to make their record 6-4 and keep alive their bid for the playoffs.

Warren Capone
New Orleans
Detroit's Herman Weaver received a bad snap from center on a punt attempt and fumbled when he tried to run with the ball. Capone picked up the fumble and ran two yards for a touchdown that was the difference in the Saints' 17-16 victory over the Lions.

Louis Carter
Tampa Bay
A bright spot for the winless Buccaneers all season, Carter was busy as usual against the New York Jets. He gained 79 yards in 19 carries, caught 6 passes for 37 yards, and returned three kickoffs for 73 yards. Carter leads Tampa Bay with 716 yards total offense.

Sonny Collins
Atlanta
Since Collins was given a starting opportunity in the ninth week of the season, the rookie from Kentucky has run for at least 100 yards in both of his starts. He gained 107 yards in the Falcons' win over San Francisco and set a club record with 31 carries.

Clark Gaines
New York Jets
Gaines was not chosen in the NFL draft this year. The rookie running back from Wake Forest signed as a free agent. He gained 103 yards in 27 carries and scored once against Tampa Bay and has 100 yards or more in three of the last four games.

Drew Pearson
Dallas
Pearson caught nine passes for 135 yards. The most important two catches came in the last 26 seconds of the first half when Buffalo and Dallas were tied 7-7. Pearson took a 40-yard pass from Roger Staubach on one play and a 21-yard TD pass the next.

Reflections

The St. Louis Cardinals have achieved two distinctions since Don Coryell became head coach in 1973. They have become winners (a 29-9 regular season record since 1974) and they have shown an ability to win the close games. The Cardinals have played 20 games that have been decided by a difference of four points or less since 1973; their record is 15 wins, 4 losses, and 1 tie. Since they started winning in Coryell's second season, their record is 15-2 in tight games . . . if that's any consolation to the Los Angeles Rams.

The Rams led St. Louis 14-6 at the half this week, then took a 21-6 lead on the first play of the third quarter, when Cullen Bryant returned the kickoff 90 yards. Los Angeles had a 15-point lead and was playing at home, but St. Louis had the Rams right where it wanted them. Quarterback Jim Hart, who completed 13 of 16 passes for 229 yards and a touchdown in the second half, began to find wide receivers Ike Harris and Pat Tilley.

Harris, 6 feet 3 inches, was difficult to cover for Rams cornerbacks Monte Jackson (5-11) and Rod Perry (5-9), especially when Hart purposely threw high to Harris. Tilley, 5-10, was playing in place of the injured Mel Gray and he consistently found openings in the secondary. Harris caught seven passes in the second half and finished with eight receptions for 130 yards. Tilley had six for 120. Tight end J.V. Cain caught two for 47, one of them a 25-yard touchdown with 4:23 left that cut Los Angeles's lead to 28-27.

The Rams, who were restricted to 83 yards in the second half by St. Louis's supposedly tenderloin defense, were able to hammer out one first down when they attempted to run out the clock after the kickoff. But they were forced to punt with 1:52 left. Rusty Jackson lofted a high deep kick and the Rams had good coverage, but the ball went right to Terry Metcalf. The Cardinals formed enough of a convoy that Metcalf was able to return the ball 29 yards to the Los Angeles 48. Hart hit Harris for 26 yards on third and 10. Two plays later Steve Jones ran 14 yards. Twenty-five seconds remained.

Hart told referee Ben Dreith that the Cardinals would use their final time out with three seconds remaining. That meant that if Jim Bakken made a 25-yard field goal attempt there would be no time left for the Rams to retaliate. The clock began to tick. As the seconds burned away . . . 15, 14, 13, 12, 11, 10 . . . some of the St. Louis players apparently became confused. With seven seconds remaining guard Roger Finnie frantically signaled for a time out. Bakken hustled onto the field and kicked the field goal.

Three seconds remained. The Rams' Rob Scribner took the kickoff and returned the ball from the 25 to his 47, where Scribner fumbled. Tom Geredine of Los Angeles then picked up the ball and raced to St. Louis's 39 before he was finally brought down.

It was the sixth game the Cardinals have been involved in this year that has come down to the last play. St. Louis has won all six.

The New York Giants had another kind of streak. They had lost all nine of their games —the longest succession of defeats in the team's 52-year history—and they were playing the Washington Redskins, to whom they had lost 14 in a row dating to 1970. The score was 9-9 in the fourth quarter. Joe Danelo, whose name heretofore had not evoked memories of the Giants' glorious past, was attempting a 50-yard field goal with 4:32 left in regulation play. Danelo, who had made only three of nine attempts coming into the game since joining the Giants after a trade with Green Bay in September, had kicked field goals of 30, 26, and 39 yards, offsetting Mark Moseley's field goals of 41, 31, and 32 yards for Washington. Center Ralph Hill snapped the ball, holder Larry Mallory placed it, and Danelo slammed the ball down the middle, through the uprights. "I had a lump in my throat," he admitted.

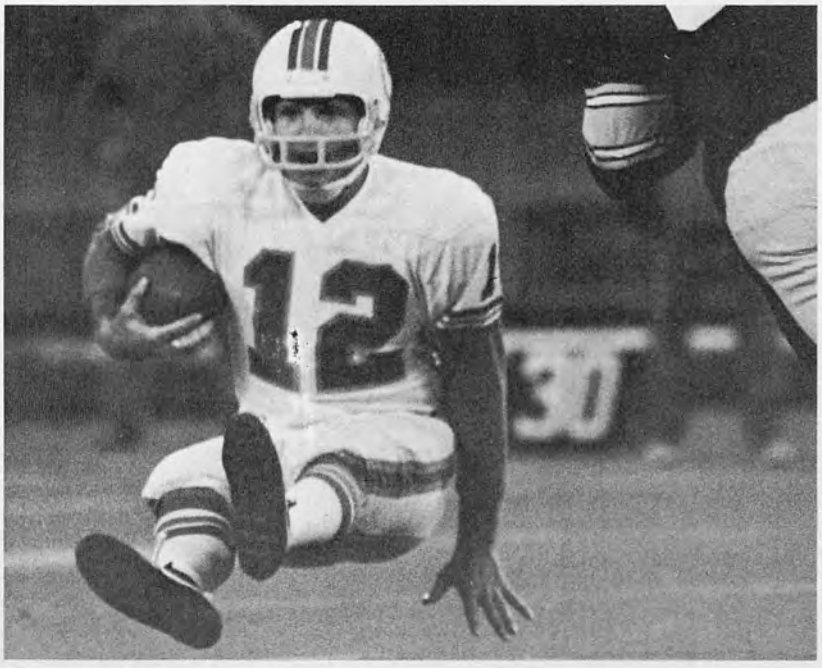
Jets Win, Too

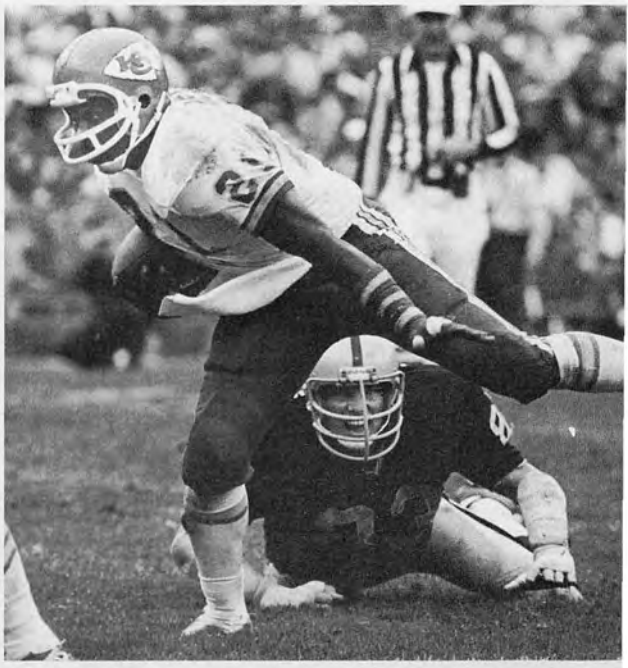
Giants coach John McVay had a lump in his throat, too, until Jim Stienke intercepted a pass in the end zone to insure the 12-9 victory, McVay's first since he replaced Bill Arnsparger three weeks ago. With the Giants snapping their losing streak, New York football fans were treated to a rare parlay: It was the first time both New York teams had won on the same day since the 1972 season.

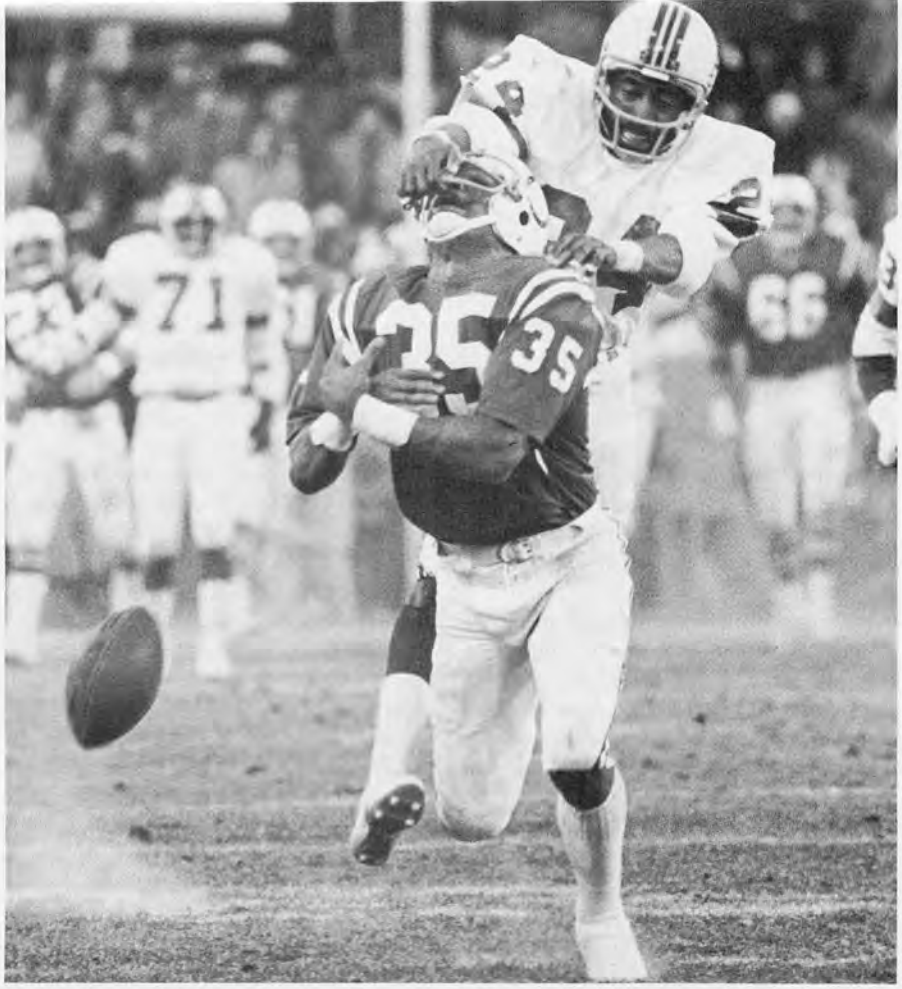
There were 72,975 persons looking on in Giants Stadium and there were 46,427 watching 25 miles away in Shea Stadium, where the New York Jets beat Tampa Bay 34-0. More important to the Jets, Joe Namath had his best game of the year. Namath replaced starting quarterback Richard Todd with 2:02 left in the first quarter. When he retired at the half, Namath had completed 7 of 12 passes for 94 yards and one touchdown, and directed the Jets to a 24-0 lead.

STALLINGS
56

Seattle scared the Vikings, New England won its feud with the Colts, the Giants stunned Washington, and Walter Payton became the first rusher over 1,000 yards.







◀ *(Top) As Atlanta running back Sonny Collins streaked right on a sweep, the bulk of the Falcons' line triple-teamed the 49ers' great sacker, Tommy Hart.*

◀ *(Near left) Kansas City's Tommy Reamon avoided a prone Ted Hendricks, but Oakland's defense held Reamon to 30 yards rushing as the Raiders won again.*

◀ *Miami quarterback Bob Griese took a bouncing from the Steel Curtain and, in this case, L.C. Greenwood.*

▲ *(Top) Baltimore wide receiver Glenn Doughty, closely guarded by the Patriots' Bob Howard, failed to catch this pass.*

▲ *The Giants hadn't won a game for the first nine weeks and things looked bleak when the Redskins drove from their own 33 with 4:23 left to the New York 7 with 41 seconds to play. But Joe Theismann's pass to running back Mike Thomas was intercepted by Jim Steinke, thwarting the threat.*

Numbers

Standings

AFC East	W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP
Baltimore	8	2	0	.800	292	170
New England	7	3	0	.700	242	178
Miami	5	5	0	.500	182	174
N.Y. Jets	3	7	0	.300	110	233
Buffalo	2	8	0	.200	171	199
AFC Central						
Cincinnati	8	2	0	.800	243	141
Cleveland	6	4	0	.600	199	218
Pittsburgh	6	4	0	.600	240	119
Houston	4	6	0	.400	176	193
AFC West						
Oakland	9	1	0	.900	216	194
Denver	6	4	0	.600	242	125
San Diego	4	6	0	.400	181	218
Kansas City	3	7	0	.300	188	298
Tampa Bay	0	10	0	.000	88	266
NFC East	**W**	**L**	**T**	**Pct.**	**Pts.**	**OP**
Dallas	9	1	0	.900	227	129
St. Louis	8	2	0	.800	244	201
Washington	6	4	0	.600	187	177
Philadelphia	3	7	0	.300	124	200
N.Y. Giants	1	9	0	.100	91	193
NFC Central						
Minnesota	8	1	1	.850	223	130
Chicago	5	5	0	.500	179	157
Detroit	4	6	0	.400	194	152
Green Bay	4	6	0	.400	165	226
NFC West						
Los Angeles	6	3	1	.650	216	156
San Francisco	6	4	0	.600	213	131
Atlanta	3	7	0	.300	121	199
New Orleans	3	7	0	.300	175	232
Seattle	2	8	0	.200	169	289

Scores

American Football Conference
Denver 17, San Diego 0
Cincinnati 31, Houston 27
Oakland 21, Kansas City 10
Pittsburgh 14, Miami 3
New England 21, Baltimore 14
New York Jets 34, Tampa Bay 0

National Football Conference
New Orleans 17, Detroit 16
Chicago 24, Green Bay 13
St. Louis 30, Los Angeles 28
Atlanta 21, San Francisco 16
Minnesota 27, Seattle 21
New York Giants 12, Washington 9

Interconference Games
Cleveland 24, Philadelphia 3
Dallas 17, Buffalo 10
AFC, 10 victories; NFC, 8 victories.

Newsmakers

Walter Payton of Chicago became the first rusher to gain 1,000 yards. He had 109 yards in 18 carries and scored one touchdown, giving him 1,008 yards and 12 touchdowns. **Don Calhoun,** a replacement for Sam Cunningham, who was injured, gained 141 yards in 24 carries for New England.

Fran Tarkenton's two touchdown passes gave him 301 for his career, a first for NFL quarterbacks. Detroit's **Greg Landry** threw for 310 yards and two touchdowns.

Steve Raible of Seattle caught three passes for 112 yards and a touchdown. **Ahmad Rashad** of Minnesota caught nine passes for 93 yards.

Week 11

The Eleventh Week, November 21, 1976

▶ *There must be a sort of heart-stopping fear that overcomes a quarterback when a man like Carl Eller is bearing down on him. Carlos Brown of Green Bay stopped short when he saw the 250-pounder. Brown suffered three interceptions in this, his first NFL start.*

People

Ken Burrough
Houston
Burrough combined with quarterback John Hadl to score on a 69-yard pass against Pittsburgh. It was the first touchdown against the Steelers in 22 quarters. Houston, however, lost its sixth game in a row after a 4-1 start. Pittsburgh won sixth in row after 1-4 start.

Roman Gabriel
Philadelphia
Gabriel completed 12 of 25 passes for 146 yards and one touchdown against Oakland in his first appearance in a football game since December 7, 1975. Gabriel had been sidelined after a knee operation and had not run a play from scrimmage until the game.

Archie Griffin
Cincinnati
The two-time Heisman trophy winner from Ohio State had his best game as a professional, rushing for 139 yards in 13 carries and scoring the game's first touchdown on a 77-yard run. Cincinnati's come-from-behind victory maintained lead in AFC Central.

Steve Largent
Seattle
Largent caught six passes for 101 yards and a touchdown and offered another reason why the Seahawks made one of the best deals of the year. The rookie from Tulsa University was acquired from Houston in the preseason after Houston drafted him in fourth round.

Prentice McCray
New England
"Before the game, I said to myself, 'I want two today,'" said McCray after he intercepted two of Joe Namath's passes in the Patriots' 38-24 victory over the New York Jets. McCray returned the passes 63 and 55 yards for touchdowns in the second and third quarters.

Mark van Eeghen
Oakland
"Basically and statistically, it was the best game I've had as a pro," the three-year veteran said after gaining 133 yards in 21 carries and scoring a touchdown. "Maybe I've blocked better," he added, "but I guess you're never going to have a perfect game."

Reflections

Two of the eight positions in the NFL playoffs were filled this week by a couple old familiar faces. The Minnesota Vikings beat Green Bay and clinched their eighth NFC Central championship in the last nine years and the Oakland Raiders defeated Philadelphia and won their fifth consecutive AFC West title.

It is always prudent to reserve invitations for the Raiders and Vikings when discussing the NFL's postseason party. But after 11 weeks there still are 13 other social climbers attempting to gain entrance, with room for only six. Those teams are Los Angeles and San Francisco in the NFC West; Chicago and Detroit in the NFC Central; Dallas, Washington, and St. Louis in the NFC East; Denver in the AFC West; Pittsburgh, Cleveland and Cincinnati in the AFC Central, and Baltimore and New England in the AFC East.

A notable absentee is Miami. The Dolphins were eliminated by Baltimore in a Monday night game this week. Their 17-16 loss was typical of what has happened to Miami this season. The Dolphins struggled against a strong current all evening and finally scored a tying touchdown on Benny Malone's three-yard run with 12 seconds to play. Then Garo Yepremian's extra-point kick, which would have tied the score, was blocked by Baltimore's Mike Barnes. Dolphins' coach Don Shula considered the startling turn of events for a few seconds, then motioned for his kickoff team and plotted to recover an onside kick. For a moment it appeared Miami had pulled it off, but the Dolphins were offside.

Miami fell to 5-6, assuring the Dolphins of the poorest record of the Shula era, which began in 1970 and includes three visits to the Super Bowl and a minimum of 10 victories in the six seasons prior to this one.

The Colts, meanwhile, are 9-2 and New England is 8-3. The most interested observer of this situation is Pittsburgh. The Steelers have won six in a row and probably are playing as well as they have at anytime since they ascended to the NFL championship in Super Bowl IX. But unless Cincinnati, Baltimore, or New England folds, the Steelers might not make the playoffs. At 7-4, Pittsburgh trails 9-2 Cincinnati in its division; it does not figure that the Steelers will win their division. That leaves a wild card invitation to the playoffs. New England not only has a better record than the Steelers, but it also holds a victory over Pittsburgh. That is a factor that would be considered should Pittsburgh and New England finish with the same records. Denver and Cleveland harbor playoff aspirations, too. Their 7-4 records keep them in the running.

The closest race in the NFC is in the Eastern Division. Dallas is 9-2, St. Louis 8-3, and Washington 7-4. Washington cannot afford to lose another game but it has a big plus in its bid for a wild card berth. The Redskins have beaten the Cardinals twice. The latest occasion was this week in St. Louis, where running back Mike Thomas set a team record with 195 yards in 31 carries, scoring once on a 22-yard run in the third quarter that put Washington ahead for the first time at 13-7. "It's the biggest win we've had in six years," said Washington coach George Allen, who couldn't resist adding, "It was a complete team victory . . . a dedicated group of forty-three men playing their hearts out." Allen's gushing testimonies to his team may be corny but no one can doubt their veracity. As was the case when they beat St. Louis earlier in the season, the Redskins were coming off a defeat and faced elimination if they faltered again. After the victory Thomas said, "We've still got hope and we've still got a chance. You've got to keep it going and never let up."

Falconry Rediscovered

The Atlanta Falcons took a page from the Redskins' book of homilies. The Falcons lost seven of their first nine games. Along the way they lost their quarterback, Steve Bartkowski, for the season and changed coaches, Pat Peppler, the team's general manager, succeeding Marion Campbell. They also suffered the indignity of losing to Seattle, an expansion team. But in the last two weeks, Atlanta has knocked off San Francisco and Dallas. Quarterback Scott Hunter, waived out of the NFL in 1975, was signed as a free agent last June and has directed the victories over the 49ers and Cowboys.

The Falcons trailed Dallas 10-0 at the end of three quarters, then scored all their points in a five-minute span of the fourth. In five previous games against Dallas, Atlanta never had gotten closer than a touchdown and had been outscored by 145-38. The victory raised Peppler's record to 3-3 in his interim status as head coach. "I'm too excited to analyze the game," he admitted.

81

The eventual Super Bowl combatants, Oakland and Minnesota, were the first teams to clinch division titles, and Baltimore and Dallas appeared ready to do the same.

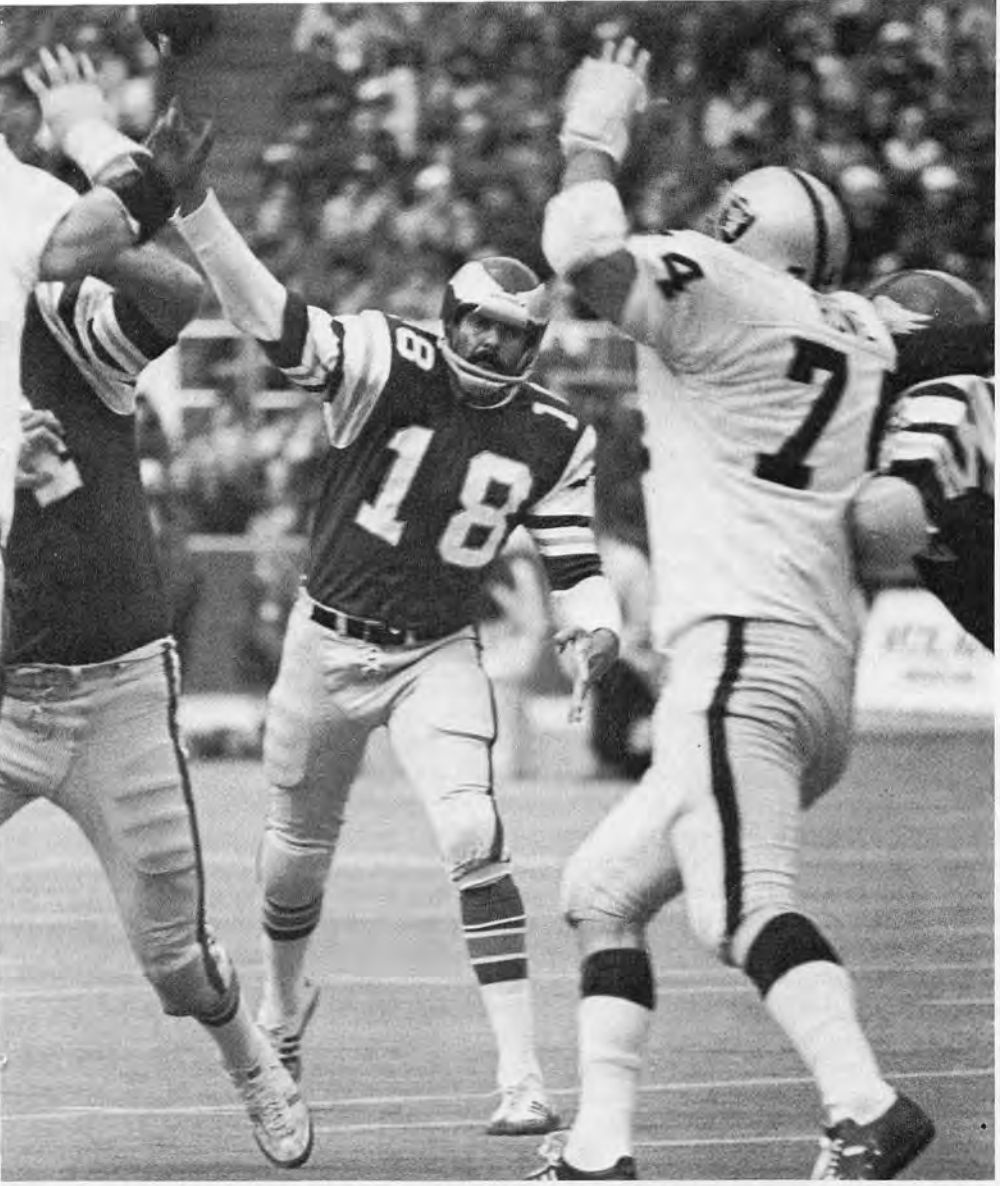
▲ *This may have been turning point week for Walter Payton in his battle with O.J. Simpson for the rushing title. The Lions used a swarming defense keyed to Payton and held the Bears' star to 40 yards while O.J. gained 118 to shoot back into contention for the rushing crown.*

◄ *It would be a bad pun to say that Atlanta tackle Jeff Merrow used his head when he stopped Dallas' Preston Pearson here. The aroused Falcons, humiliated 30-13 two weeks earlier by the expansion Seahawks, came back to whip Dallas, preventing the Cowboys from clinching a tie for the NFC East championship.*

► *(Top) Roman Gabriel came back after surgery had idled him for nearly a year. He showed a strong passing arm, but Oakland's mighty Super Bowl-bound Raiders won.*

► *(Middle) In a season of injury and frustration, Miami lost to Baltimore by a point, and this was the point. Mike Barnes, who can't be seen, blocked this extra point try by Garo Yepremian with 12 seconds to play, preventing an overtime period.*

► *Mike Thomas, who cracked the George Allen rookie barrier in 1975 with the Redskins, set a club record with 195 yards against St. Louis.*



Numbers

Standings

AFC East	W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP
Baltimore	9	2	0	.818	309	186
New England	8	3	0	.727	280	202
Miami	5	6	0	.455	198	191
N.Y. Jets	3	8	0	.273	134	271
Buffalo	2	9	0	.182	184	233
AFC Central						
Cincinnati	9	2	0	.818	270	165
Cleveland	7	4	0	.636	223	225
Pittsburgh	7	4	0	.636	272	135
Houston	4	7	0	.364	192	225
AFC West						
Oakland*	10	1	0	.909	242;	201
Denver	7	4	0	.636	256	138
San Diego	5	6	0	.455	215	231
Kansas City	3	8	0	.273	212	325
Tampa Bay	0	11	0	.000	95	290
NFC East	**W**	**L**	**T**	**Pct.**	**Pts.**	**OP**
Dallas	9	2	0	.818	237	146
St. Louis	8	3	0	.727	254	217
Washington	7	4	0	.636	203	187
Philadelphia	3	8	0	.273	131	226
N.Y. Giants	1	10	0	.091	104	207
NFC Central						
Minnesota*	9	1	1	.864	240	140
Chicago	5	6	0	.455	189	171
Detroit	5	6	0	.455	208	162
Green Bay	4	7	0	.364	175	243
NFC West						
Los Angeles	7	3	1	.682	239	159
San Francisco	6	5	0	.545	216	154
New Orleans	4	7	0	.364	226	259
Atlanta	4	7	0	.364	138	209
Seattle	2	9	0	.182	196	340

*Clinched division title

Scores

American Football Conference

Cincinnati 27, Kansas City 24
Cleveland 24, Tampa Bay 7
Pittsburgh 32, Houston 16
New England 38, New York Jets 24
San Diego 34, Buffalo 13
Baltimore 17, Miami 16

National Football Conference

Detroit 14, Chicago 7
Atlanta 17, Dallas 10
Los Angeles 23, San Francisco 3
Minnesota 17, Green Bay 10
New Orleans 51, Seattle 27
Washington 16, St. Louis 10

Inter-Conference Games

Denver 14, New York Giants 13
Oakland 26, Philadelphia 7
AFC, 12 victories; NFC, 8 victories.

Newsmakers

Buffalo's **O.J. Simpson** gained 118 yards to pass 100 for the fourth time this season and thirty-sixth time in his eight-year career. New England's **Don Calhoun** gained 109 yards. It was the second straight week Calhoun has been over 100 as a stand-in for the injured Sam Cunningham.

Oakland's **Ken Stabler** completed 14 of 18 passes for 133 yards and his one touchdown increased his league-leading total to 21. Minnesota's **Fran Tarkenton** completed 23 of 43 for 180 yards and two touchdowns. He leads the NFL with 201 completions.

San Diego's **Charlie Joiner** caught six passes for 97 yards and two touchdowns.

Week 12

The Twelfth Week, November 28, 1976

▶ *Pittsburgh's Franco Harris made like a snow plow in a Cincinnati blizzard. Harris gained 87 yards and scored the only touchdown as the Steelers remained alive. If the Bengals had won, they would have been 10-2 and the Steelers 7-5.*

People

Don Calhoun
New England
Calhoun gained 177 yards in 25 carries as the Patriots rushed for 332 yards, a club record. Since replacing injured Sam Cunningham (shoulder) two and a half games ago, Calhoun has gained 427 yards in 71 carries. The victory was the Patriots' fourth in a row.

John Hadl
Houston
Hadl threw touchdown passes of 16 yards to Ken Burrough and 40 yards to Billy (White Shoes) Johnson as the Oilers beat Atlanta and ended a six-game losing streak. It was Hadl's first victory in three games as an Oilers' starting quarterback.

Ed Podolak
Kansas City
Podolak rushed for 127 yards in 25 carries and scored two touchdowns on his best day since 1973. He had missed five games this season with injuries. The performance was marked by the seventh 100-yard rushing effort in Podolak's career.

Mike Thomas
Washington
Philadelphia held Thomas to 49 yards in 21 carries, but he scored two touchdowns on passes and went over the 1,000-yard mark in rushing. As a rookie in 1975, Thomas rushed for 919. Larry Brown holds the club record with 1,216 in 1972.

Danny White
Dallas
White was in punt formation with the score tied 7-7 in the second quarter of a game with St. Louis. But instead of punting, he threw a short pass to Benny Barnes, who ran 43 yards to the Cardinals' 29, setting up a touchdown. Dallas won 19-14.

Dwight White
Pittsburgh
The Steelers have given up only 28 points while winning their last seven games, but White made the biggest contribution when he recovered Boobie Clark's fumble on Cincinnati's 24-yard line this week, setting up the winning score in a 7-3 victory.

Reflections

Published reports recently have indicated the dawning of another ice age, a fact that seemed to be established in the NFL this week. Winter hit with staggering impact. Not just at the Pittsburgh-Cincinnati game, which was played in a blizzard on national television. In Green Bay, where the Packers and Chicago Bears met for the one-hundred sixteenth time in their 57-season rivalry, the temperature was 5 degrees with a wind-chill factor of 19 below zero at kickoff.

Turnstiles froze at Lambeau Field, precluding an exact count of people in the stands. Ed Hanner, a son of assistant Packers coach Dave Hanner, put down a cup of hot coffee on the photo deck atop the press box. When Hanner reached to take a sip a few minutes later, he discovered that the coffee was frozen. The band from Green Bay West High School, scheduled to perform at halftime, was sent home in the first quarter. A horn blower in the Packers' band had to be treated when he tore skin off the lips of his mouth. But even though the sold-out game was on local television, Packers officials estimated that at least 54,000 of the team's 56,267 season ticket holders were in attendance.

That shouldn't come as a surprise. The hearty people of the Upper Midwest relish going head-to-head with the elements. The Packers-Bears contest was played in the coldest football weather in Green Bay since the Ice Bowl of December 31, 1967 when the Packers and Dallas Cowboys met for the NFL championship. It was 13 below zero with a wind-chill factor of 46 below that Arctic afternoon.

The temperature was in the twenties when the Steelers played the Cincinnati Bengals in Riverfront Stadium. Snow was visible but not a factor at kickoff. By the end of the day—after the Steelers made another successful last stand, winning their seventh straight, 7-3—the white stuff was piled high on the sidelines. Cincinnati's ground crew had to make several trips onto the playing field, clearing placements for the ball and attempting to bring the lines into sight. The Bengals led 3-0 in the third quarter before Franco Harris skied four yards to the only touchdown.

With 1:29 remaining in the game, Cincinnati moved to the Steelers' 24-yard line (at least that's what the general consensus was). Steelers free safety Mike Wagner said that when he dropped 25 yards deep on pass coverage he barely could discern the form of Bengals quarterback Ken Anderson. Wagner said it was even more difficult finding the ball, which usually came into view halfway to the receiver. It was just as difficult for Anderson and his targets. Slipping and sliding, Anderson threw four incomplete passes from the 24, and Pittsburgh still was alive in its struggle for a playoff spot, although Cincinnati held a one-game lead in the AFC Central with two remaining.

The weather also was cold in Pontiac, Michigan, this week. It was in the mid-thirties when Buffalo and Detroit squared off. But that was *outside*. Inside the Silverdome, the weather was a "dome-controlled" 60 degrees. It probably would have made no difference to Buffalo's O.J. Simpson, a runner for all degrees. Simpson set an NFL record with 273 yards rushing. And for the first time this year O.J. caught and passed Baltimore's Lydell Mitchell for the AFC rushing lead. Simpson performed his artistry in the Bills' 27-14 loss on Thanksgiving Day. By the end of the week O.J.'s 1,129 yards were only 29 behind Walter Payton's league-leading 1,158.

Who's Number One?

After missing the entire preseason and gaining only 105 yards in his first three games, and then getting thrown out of a game in the first quarter for fighting with New England's Mel Lunsford after gaining just eight yards, Simpson has mustered his fifth 200-yard game and thirty-seventh 100-yard game. It is as if O.J. has made this point to Payton, Mitchell, and the NFL's other good runners: "Okay, you guys, I respect your ability, but don't forget who's number one" . . . not just in television commercials for rental cars.

Meanwhile, Bert Jones of Baltimore was getting support as the number one quarterback from none other than the distinguished Joe Namath. "He's in a class by himself," Namath said after Jones completed 22 of 32 passes for 175 yards and three touchdowns in a victory over the New York Jets.

Jones had a big day, but Miami's Bob Griese would like to forget his. After gaining a first down at Cleveland's 5-yard line with time running out, Griese called a running play. Norm Bulaich was stopped on the 3 as the gun went off. Griese forgot that the clock resumed ticking after a measurement for a first down.

"I just blew it," he said.

32
HARRIS
3

1

2

Old Man Winter struck but the development of indoor football helped O. J. Simpson avoid the chill and set an all-time NFL rushing record. Bert Jones riddled the Jets.

◀ *O.J. Simpson set an NFL single-game rushing record with 273 yards against Detroit on Thanksgiving Day, and later he posed happily with those who helped make it possible.*

◀ *(Near left) Mark Washington leaped on Cliff Harris's back in joy after Harris broke up a Jim Hart pass in the end zone on fourth down with eight seconds left. The Cowboys clinched at least a tie for the NFC East title.*

◀ *Moments earlier, on first down, Hart passed to J.V. Cain in the end zone, but Charlie Waters and Mel Renfro of Dallas teamed to break it up.*

▲ *(Top) Tight end Tom Mitchell said, "Follow me," but running back Delvin Williams had Carl Eller to contend with. The 49ers won as Williams rushed for 153 yards and Wilbur Jackson added 157.*

▲ *(Left) Baltimore's versatile Lydell Mitchell gained 93 yards rushing and caught 12 passes as the Colts crushed the Jets.*

▲ *A mental error by veteran quarterback Bob Griese with time running out assured Don Shula of his first losing season since 1959. The setting is appropriate: frustration in a Cleveland snowstorm.*

Numbers

Standings

AFC East	W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP
Baltimore	10	2	0	.833	342	202
New England	9	3	0	.750	318	216
Miami	5	7	0	.417	211	208
N.Y. Jets	3	9	0	.250	150	304
Buffalo	2	10	0	.167	198	260
AFC Central						
Cincinnati	9	3	0	.750	273	172
Cleveland	8	4	0	.667	240	238
Pittsburgh	8	4	0	.667	279	138
Houston	5	7	0	.417	212	239
AFC West						
Oakland*	11	1	0	.917	291	217
Denver	7	5	0	.583	270	176
San Diego	5	7	0	.417	235	254
Kansas City	4	8	0	.333	235	345
Tampa Bay	0	12	0	.000	111	339
NFC East	**W**	**L**	**T**	**Pct.**	**Pts.**	**OP**
Dallas	10	2	0	.833	256	160
St. Louis	8	4	0	.667	268	236
Washington	8	4	0	.667	227	187
Philadelphia	3	9	0	.250	131	250
N.Y. Giants	2	10	0	.167	132	223
NFC Central						
Minnesota*	9	2	1	.792	256	160
Chicago	6	6	0	.500	205	181
Detroit	6	6	0	.500	235	176
Green Bay	4	8	0	.333	185	259
NFC West						
Los Angeles	8	3	1	.708	272	173
San Francisco	7	5	0	.583	236	170
Atlanta	4	8	0	.333	152	229
New Orleans	4	8	0	.333	240	292
Seattle	2	10	0	.167	212	368

*Clinched division title

Scores

American Football Conference

New England 38, Denver 14
Kansas City 23, San Diego 20
Cleveland 17, Miami 13
Baltimore 33, New York Jets 16
Pittsburgh 7, Cincinnati 3
Oakland 49, Tampa Bay 16

National Football Conference

Dallas 19, St. Louis 14
Chicago 16, Green Bay 10
Los Angeles 33, New Orleans 14
Washington 24, Philadelphia 0
New York Giants 28, Seattle 16
San Francisco 20, Minnesota 16

Inter-Conference Games

Houston 20, Atlanta 14
Detroit 27, Buffalo 14
AFC, 13 victories; NFC, 9 victories

Newsmakers

San Francisco's **Wilbur Jackson,** with career highs of 30 carries and 157 yards, and teammate **Delvin Williams,** with 153 yards in 20 carries, became the third pair of running backs from one team to each gain 150 yards on the ground in one game. Williams also became the first 49ers runner to rush for 1,000 yards or more since **J.D. Smith** in 1959. Detroit's **Dexter Bussey** gained 137 yards.

San Diego's **Dan Fouts** and Washington's **Billy Kilmer,** each threw for three touchdowns.

Ollie Smith made his first start for Green Bay and caught four passes for 121 yards. **Ahmad Rashad** of Minnesota caught six for 103 and a touchdown.

Week 13

The Thirteenth Week, December 4, 1976

▶ This was the game the Raiders didn't have to win, and many thought they wouldn't. A Cincinnati victory would keep Pittsburgh out of the playoffs, so the Bengals had incentive. But, with Fred Biletnikoff and Ken Stabler hooking up, Oakland won easily.

People

Franco Harris
Pittsburgh
Harris gained 55 yards in 14 carries, giving him 1,024. He became the fourth player in history to rush for 5,000 yards in his first four seasons (5,029) and the fourth to have four or more 1,000-yard seasons. His 266 carries this year set a club mark.

MacArthur Lane
Kansas City
At 34, Lane is the oldest running back in the NFL. He also has caught more passes than anyone this year. Lane's seven receptions against Denver gave him 60. In addition, Lane leads the Chiefs in rushing with 492 yards in 150 carries.

Ed Marshall
New York Giants
Marshall, who played in the World Football League in 1975 and was released by Detroit this year before signing as a free agent in midseason with the Giants, caught three passes for 98 yards and two touchdowns as New York won its third game in its last four starts.

Mercury Morris
San Diego
Morris ran 13 yards for the winning touchdown as the Chargers defeated San Francisco in overtime. The Chargers took the kickoff in sudden death and drove 93 yards in five minutes, 12 seconds, for their sixth victory, the most since they won six in 1971.

Ken Reaves
St. Louis
After tight end Raymond Chester caught a 30-yard touchdown pass with Reaves defending in the third quarter, Reaves intercepted a last-minute pass from Bert Jones to Chester that saved the Cardinals' victory. "I wanted to pay him back," said Reaves.

Freddie Solomon
Miami
Solomon outgained O.J. Simpson in Miami's victory over Buffalo. Simpson rushed for 203 yards, but Solomon totaled 252, scoring on a 79-yard punt return, a 59-yard run, and 53-yard pass play. He caught four more passes for 67 yards.

Reflections

After 13 weeks 11 teams still remain in the race to Super Bowl XI, but only two playoff berths are open and five teams will fight it out for those positions next week. Baltimore, New England, and Oakland are in the AFC playoffs. Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Cleveland seek the remaining invitation. Dallas, Minnesota, and Los Angeles are in the NFL playoffs. St. Louis and Washington are eligible for the final bid.

After struggling for eight successive weeks, the Steelers finally are in a position to control their destiny. When Cincinnati was beaten by Oakland in a Monday night game, the last strand of the Bengals' once-secure three-game advantage over Pittsburgh had been ripped from its moorings. After five weeks, the Bengals were 4-1 and Pittsburgh 1-4. Cincinnati is 5-3 since that time while the Steelers are 8-0. Should Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Cleveland tie with 10-4 records at the end of the regular season, Pittsburgh will be champion because it defeated the Bengals twice during its eight-game winning streak and because it has a better intradivision record than Cleveland.

"You get in a psychological position when you're in the situation we've been in, having to win every week," says Steelers linebacker Andy Russell. "You feel as if every play is the last one of the season. That's when football's the most fun. It's *all* playoff football. You think to yourself that any one play—this one coming up—could cost us the Super Bowl."

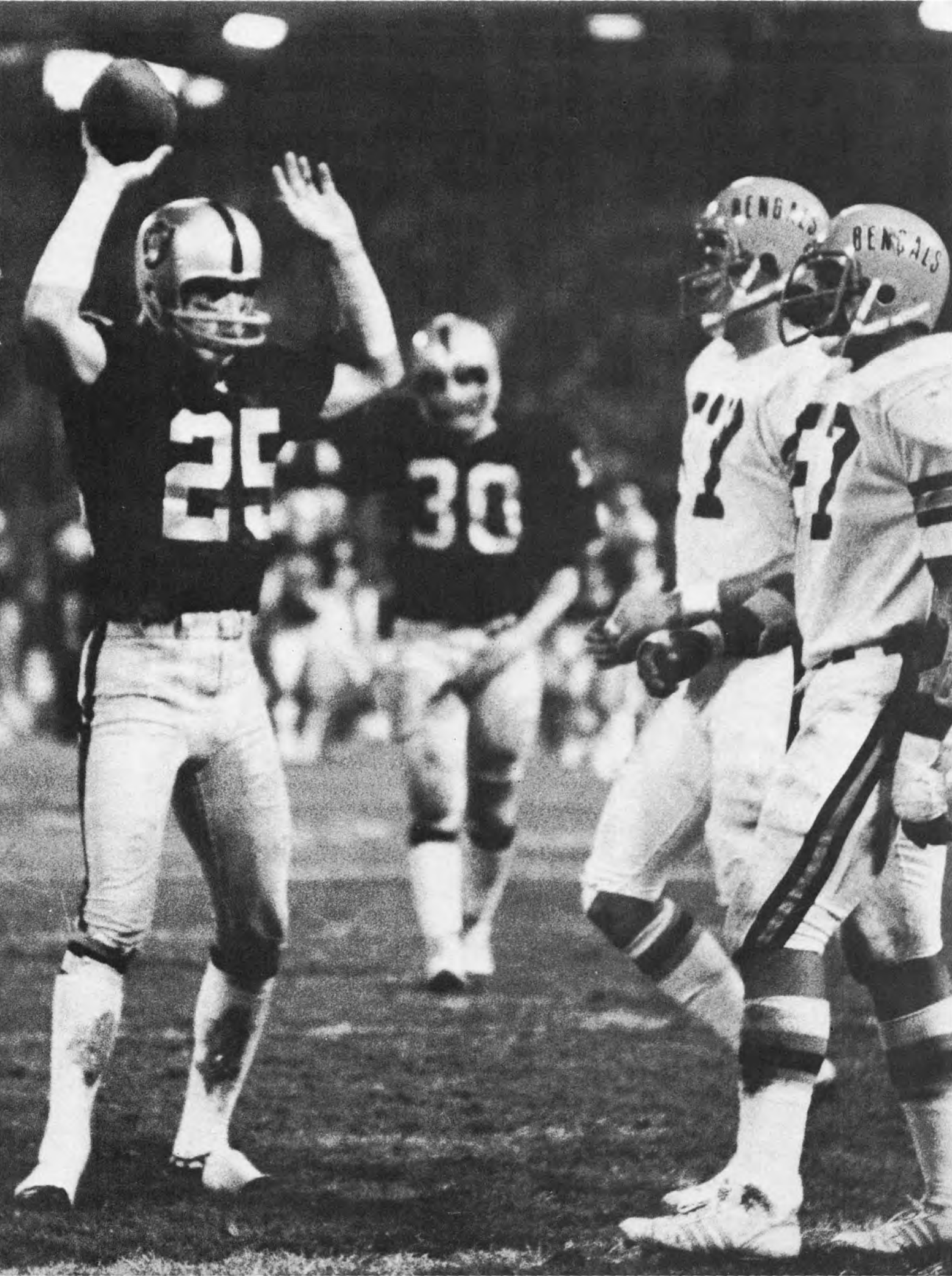
The St. Louis Cardinals felt the same way when they embarked on a successful last stand against Baltimore. The Cardinals, unlike Pittsburgh, do not control their destiny; it is in the hands of Washington. Since the Redskins have whipped St. Louis twice, the playoff bid is theirs with a victory over Dallas next week. All the Cardinals can do is win . . . and hope. That's what they did this week. They beat Baltimore 24-17 and hoped the New York Jets would beat the Redskins. But coach George Allen's gaffers, having sensed the pungent aroma of playoff money, jumped on the Jets 37-16 and sustained their determined stretch drive. Three weeks ago Washington was 6-4, two games behind the Cardinals, after an unimpressive performance against the New York Giants. That game, a 12-9 loss, marked the low point in Allen's six years in Washington; the Giants had come into the contest 0-9.

The playoff scramble is the most interesting event taking place these days, but there are others, such as O.J. Simpson's sudden bid to defend his rushing championship. On the morning of November 16, after 10 games had been played, Simpson was tenth among NFL rushers with 738 yards. He was 270 yards behind league leader Walter Payton of Chicago and he trailed AFC leader Lydell Mitchell of Baltimore by 199. Simpson started to move in the eleventh game, gaining 118 yards against San Diego. He picked up 78 yards on Payton and trailed him by 192; he gained 36 yards on Mitchell and trailed him by 163. Then came that Thanksgiving Day explosion in Detroit, where Simpson set a single-game record of 273 yards. At week's end, O.J. was 17 yards ahead of Mitchell and trailed Payton by 29. Simpson poured on the pressure this week in Miami, gaining 203 yards and setting a record with his sixth 200-yard game. That put O.J. 166 yards in front of Mitchell . . . but Payton rose to the challenge in Seattle. Payton gained 183 yards and still leads Simpson by nine yards, 1,341-1,332, going into the final game. Simpson's opponent is Baltimore, which has the AFC's third best record against the run; Payton faces Denver, which is fourth against the run.

It Left Him Breathless

Payton's big day was noteworthy since he also had 44 yards called back because of penalties against Seattle; he also did not carry the ball on Chicago's first two series of the third quarter. After gaining 114 yards in 15 carries in the first half, Payton complained of shortness of breath and was rested. The Bears' physician attributed the exhaustion partly to practicing in near-zero cold all week in Chicago, then playing in the heat-regulated Kingdome.

Simpson had a similar experience in the 76-degree warmth of Miami. He asked to be taken out of the game during the fourth quarter. "In Buffalo, where the snow was unreal, we had to practice in long johns," he told Bill Braucher of the *Miami Herald*. "It's not the best preparation for a game in Miami." Simpson, however, had been buttressed by a good home-cooked meal. "I had dinner with Larry Little [of the Dolphins] Friday night," he said. "His mother cooked fried chicken, collard greens with peppers, and macaroni and cheese. Mrs. Little inspired me . . . she makes the best fried chicken around."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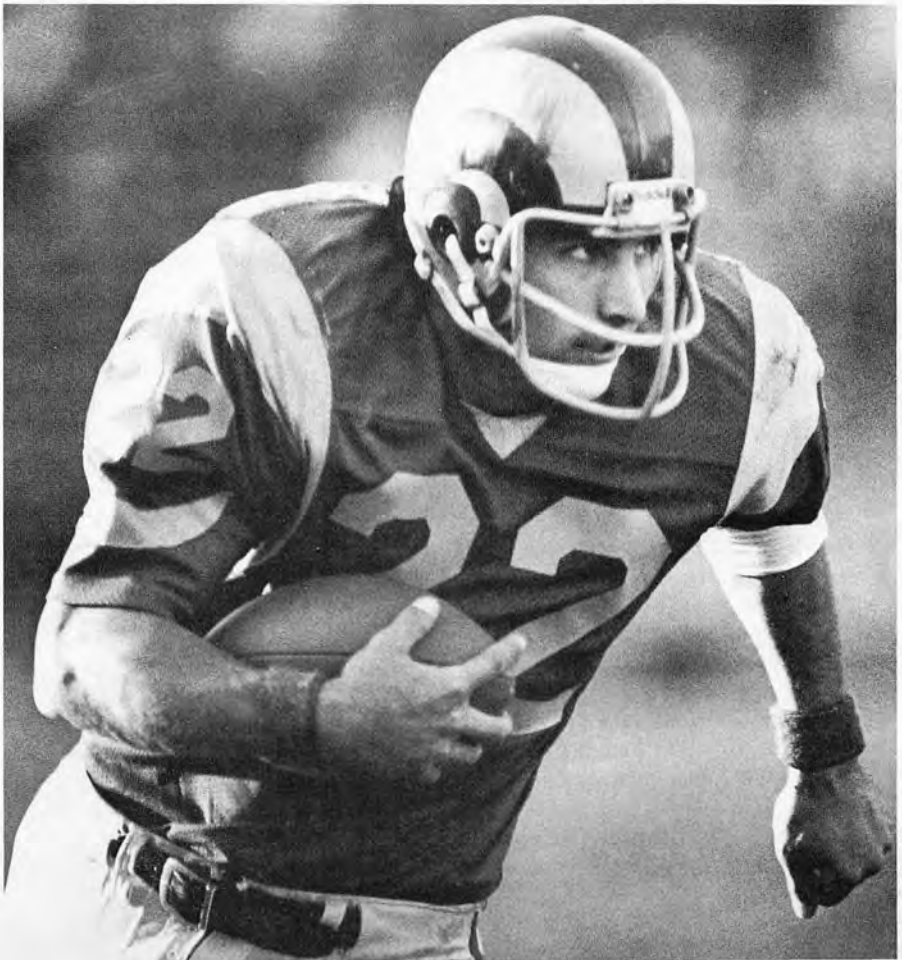
BENGALS
BENGALS

Chuck Foreman pranced in the snow,
Jackie Smith contributed a long return,
Franco Harris piled up more yardage, and
the Rams humiliated the Falcons.
Walter Payton met Simpson's challenge.

▲ *Chuck Foreman finds daylight in the snow at Minnesota. The Packers and Vikings were tied 6-6 until Foreman blasted for a pair of two-yard touchdown runs in the fourth period.*
◀ *Toni Linhart's short kickoff was fielded at the 12 by Jackie Smith, whose 35-yard return set up the Cardinals' final score of the half and last touchdown of the game in a 24-17 victory over the Colts. St. Louis thus remained tied with Washington in the NFC East as they battled for a wild card playoff spot.*
▶ *(Top) Pittsburgh's Rocky Bleier (20) poses with Franco Harris and the ball Harris carried to put the former Penn State star over the 1,000-yard mark for the season.*
▶ *It was no contest in Los Angeles, where the Rams flattened the Falcons 59-0. John Cappelletti's greatest contribution, however, was not as a ball carrier, but as a path-clearer for Lawrence McCutcheon, who got 121 yards.*



Numbers

Standings

AFC East	W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP
Baltimore	10	3	0	.769	359	226
New England	10	3	0	.769	345	222
Miami	6	7	0	.462	256	235
N.Y. Jets	3	10	0	.231	166	341
Buffalo	2	11	0	.154	225	305
AFC Central						
Cincinnati	9	4	0	.692	293	207
Cleveland	9	4	0	.692	253	248
Pittsburgh	9	4	0	.692	321	138
Houston	5	8	0	.385	222	252
AFC West						
Oakland*	12	1	0	.923	326	237
Denver	8	5	0	.615	287	192
San Diego	6	7	0	.462	248	261
Kansas City	4	9	0	.308	251	362
Tampa Bay	0	13	0	.000	111	381
NFC East	**W**	**L**	**T**	**Pct.**	**Pts.**	**OP**
Dallas*	11	2	0	.846	282	167
St. Louis	9	4	0	.692	292	253
Washington	9	4	0	.692	264	203
N.Y. Giants	3	10	0	.231	156	233
Philadelphia	3	10	0	.231	138	276
NFC Central						
Minnesota*	10	2	1	.808	276	169
Chicago	7	6	0	.538	239	188
Detroit	6	7	0	.462	245	200
Green Bay	4	9	0	.308	194	279
NFC West						
Los Angeles*	9	3	1	.731	331	173
San Francisco	7	6	0	.538	243	183
Atlanta	4	9	0	.308	152	288
New Orleans	4	9	0	.308	246	319
Seattle	2	11	0	.154	219	402

*Clinched division title

Scores

American Football Conference

Miami 45, Buffalo 27
Cleveland 13, Houston 10
Denver 17, Kansas City 16
Pittsburgh 42, Tampa Bay 0
Oakland 35, Cincinnati 20

National Football Conference

Los Angeles 59, Atlanta 0
Chicago 34, Seattle 7
Dallas 26, Philadelphia 7
New York Giants 24, Detroit 10
Minnesota 20, Green Bay 9

Inter-Conference Games

St. Louis 24, Baltimore 17
New England 27, New Orleans 6
San Diego 13, San Francisco 7, overtime
Washington 37, New York Jets 16
AFC, 15 victories; NFC, 11 victories.

Newsmakers

New England's **Steve Grogan** ran for two touchdowns, giving him 11 and tying the record for quarterbacks set in 1950 by Johnny Lujack and equaled in 1956 by Tobin Rote. With 121 yards, Los Angeles's **Lawrence McCutcheon** passed 100 for the fourth time this year, the seventeenth time in his career, and set a club season record of 1,144.

Oakland's **Ken Stabler** threw for four touchdowns, giving him 27, the most in pro football since Oakland's **Daryle Lamonica** threw for 34 in 1969.

Cincinnati's **John McDaniel** caught nine passes for 201 yards and a touchdown; he had not caught a pass all year.

Week 14

The Fourteenth Week, December 12, 1976

▶ *Powerful Jim Otis rattled the New York Giants' defense for 119 yards, but quick linebacker Brian Kelley halted him short of the goal line on this dive. Cardinals won but their season ended hours later when Washington beat Dallas to claim a playoff spot.*

People

Ed Budde
Kansas City
Budde, whose son, Brad, is a 260-pound starting freshman guard for USC, retired after 14 seasons as a guard with the Chiefs. "I've no regrets . . . I've enjoyed every minute of it," said Budde, who was named to the all time all-AFL team after the 1969 season.

Scott Bull
San Francisco
Bull, a sixth-round draft choice this season who became the 49ers' regular quarterback in two of the last three games, passed for one touchdown and ran for another as San Francisco finished the season with an 8-6 record, its best since 1972.

Sam Hunt
New England
The Patriots' linebacker intercepted Steve Spurrier's pass and ran 68 yards for a touchdown that broke a 14-14 tie in the fourth quarter of a 31-14 victory over Tampa Bay. New England's eleventh victory (against three losses) was the most in their 17-year history.

Randy Johnson
Green Bay
Johnson directed scoring drives of 69 and 68 yards in the fourth quarter and scored a touchdown on a three-yard run as the Packers snapped a four-game losing streak with a 24-20 victory at Atlanta. Johnson scrambled 6 and 11 yards on the winning drive.

Tom Sullivan
Philadelphia
Sullivan gained 121 yards in 23 carries and scored on runs of four and one yards. It was his first 100-yard rushing performance since October 7, 1973. "I hadn't been starting and that gave me incentive," he said. "I almost forgot what something like this felt like."

Norris Weese
Denver
Weese replaced Craig Penrose at quarterback in the first quarter and scrambled for 120 yards in 12 carries. He ran 15 yards on third and 10 from the Broncos' 15 with six minutes left in the game to start Denver on an 85-yard drive to the winning touchdown.

Reflections

The Pittsburgh Steelers reign again in the AFC Central and the Washington Redskins are back in the playoffs as the NFC wild card team. Cincinnati and Cleveland of the AFC and St. Louis of the NFC were eliminated this week, making room for the Steelers and Redskins. The second season in the NFL begins next week with Pittsburgh at Baltimore and New England at Oakland in AFC playoffs and Washington at Minnesota and Los Angeles at Dallas in NFC playoffs.

No one worked harder to earn their playoff positions than Pittsburgh and Washington. The Steelers finished the season with nine victories in a row, shutting out five opponents and giving up only 28 points during that span. The streak gave Pittsburgh a 10-4 record, the same as Cincinnati's, but Pittsburgh claimed the title by virtue of two victories over the Bengals. The Steelers were 1-4 on October 10 after a loss to Cleveland. Another defeat would have knocked them out of the playoffs and denied them the opportunity to set a record by winning three consecutive Super Bowls. Pittsburgh approached its task with the right attitude. "After we lost to Cleveland and were one and four, we didn't say we *couldn't* lose another game," said running back Franco Harris. "We said we *wouldn't* lose another."

A month ago the Redskins were 6-4 and their detractors were resurrecting the familiar litany: Age finally had caught up with them . . . they really *were* the "Over the Hill Gang." But Coach George Allen and his team are like a bad cold. They are very difficult to shake. The Redskins gathered themselves together to win their last four games, including two vital contests on the road—at St. Louis and Dallas—to tie the Cardinals with a 10-4 record and advance because they defeated St. Louis twice this season.

"We were written off, pronounced dead and buried, but we've got some pretty gutsy guys who just kept coming back," said Allen. "We were supposed to be too old, too slow, and over the hill. But if you have the right kind of veterans, age doesn't mean a thing."

Pittsburgh defeated Houston 21-0 Saturday to eliminate Cincinnati and Cleveland. Cleveland was beaten in Kansas City 39-14 the next day, but Cincinnati regrouped and took out its frustration on the New York Jets 42-3. "We all hoped Houston could handle Pittsburgh, but we knew they couldn't," said Bengals coach Bill Johnson.

St. Louis held out hope until late Sunday afternoon. The Cardinals came from behind, as is their custom, in the final quarter to defeat the New York Giants 17-14, then hopped a plane home from New Jersey. "We're happy now and we're hoping we'll stay happy," said Cardinals quarterback Jim Hart, feeling good about the victory but apprehensive about the outcome of the pending Washington-Dallas game. A victory by the Cowboys would have given Dallas the home-field advantage for the conference championship—should it get past the divisional playoffs. Having won the NFC East, Dallas had clinched a home-field date for the divisional playoffs. Washington's incentive, of course, was even more than that.

A Dozen at 1,000

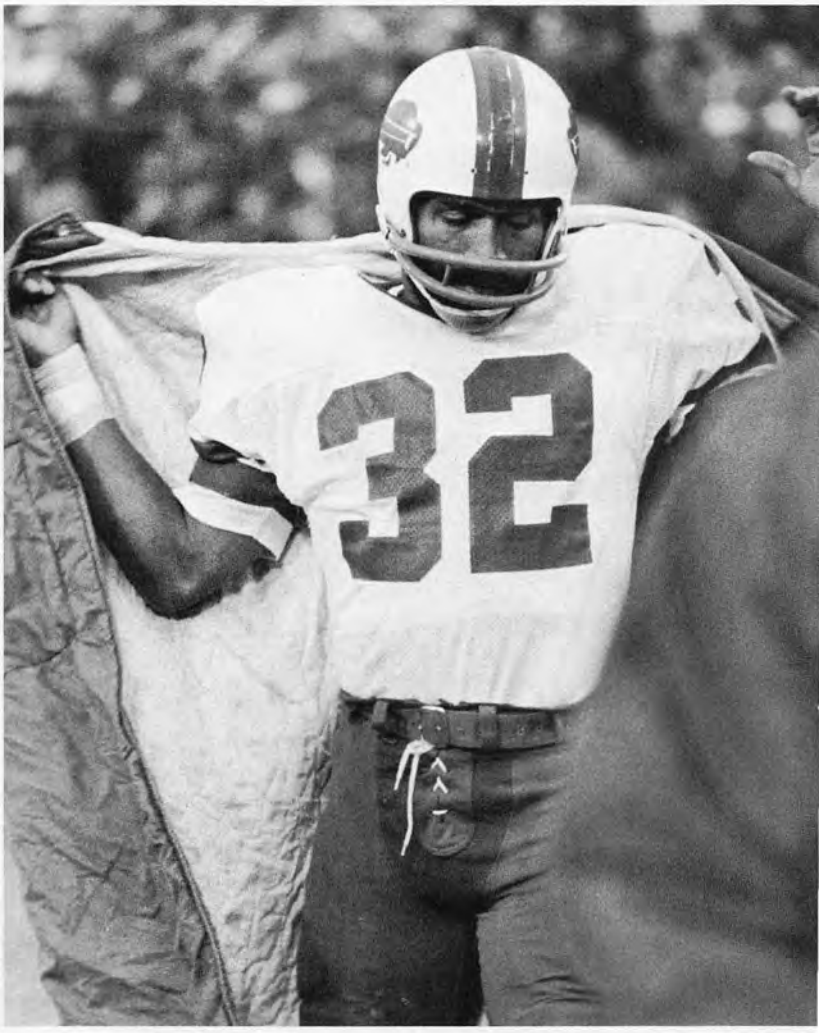
The fourteenth week also provided a lot of individual incentive, too. Buffalo's O.J. Simpson overhauled Chicago's Walter Payton to win the rushing championship for the fourth time in the last five years. Simpson gained 171 yards against Baltimore to finish with 1,503. Payton had 49 yards against Denver before an ankle injury sidelined him; he finished with 1,390.

A record twelve runners cracked 1,000 yards. The feat has been accomplished 88 times by 49 men since 1934, when the Chicago Bears' Beattie Feathers did it for the first time with 1,004. After O.J. and Payton came San Francisco's Delvin Williams (1,203), Baltimore's Lydell Mitchell (1,200), Los Angeles's Lawrence McCutcheon (1,168), Minnesota's Chuck Foreman (1,155), Pittsburgh's Franco Harris (1,128), Washington's Mike Thomas (1,101), Pittsburgh's Rocky Bleier (1,036), Oakland's Mark van Eeghen (1,012), Denver's Otis Armstrong (1,008), and Cleveland's Greg Pruitt (1,000). Bleier and Harris became the second pair from the same team to gain at least 1,000. Larry Csonka (1,117) and Mercury Morris (1,000) did it for Miami in 1972. Simpson, Payton, Williams, and Mitchell joined an even more select group of 1,200-yard rushers. That achievement has been made only 24 times by 12 players.

Then there is Harold Carmichael's continuous accomplishment. The Philadelphia Eagles' wide receiver caught four passes. He has caught at least one pass for 64 consecutive games, dating to 1971; the record is 105 by Danny Abramowicz, from 1967-74.

KELLEY
55

Simpson beat out Payton, the Steelers upended the Bengals again, and Baltimore beat up on Buffalo. Only poor Tampa Bay didn't beat anybody.



▲ *(Left) Walter Payton's sensational sophomore year ended disappointingly: he got only 49 yards before an ankle injury stopped him. O.J. Simpson won the rushing title by 113 yards over the Bears' star.*

▲ *Simpson put the pressure on Payton by rushing for 171 yards in a loss at Baltimore.*

◀ *The season was over. It was pouring in Atlanta. Neither the Packers nor the Falcons were going anywhere except home for the winter. Former Green Bay teammates and friends John Brockington (42) and Scott Hunter (16), now Atlanta's quarterback, met at midfield after the game to renew acquaintances.*

▶ *In Washington's must-win game against Dallas, Billy Kilmer faded back to pass, threw just before being hit by Dallas' blitzing linebacker Thomas Henderson, and connected with streaking running back Mike Thomas. Thomas was ankle-tackled by Randy Hughes, but by then the ball was inside the 10.*

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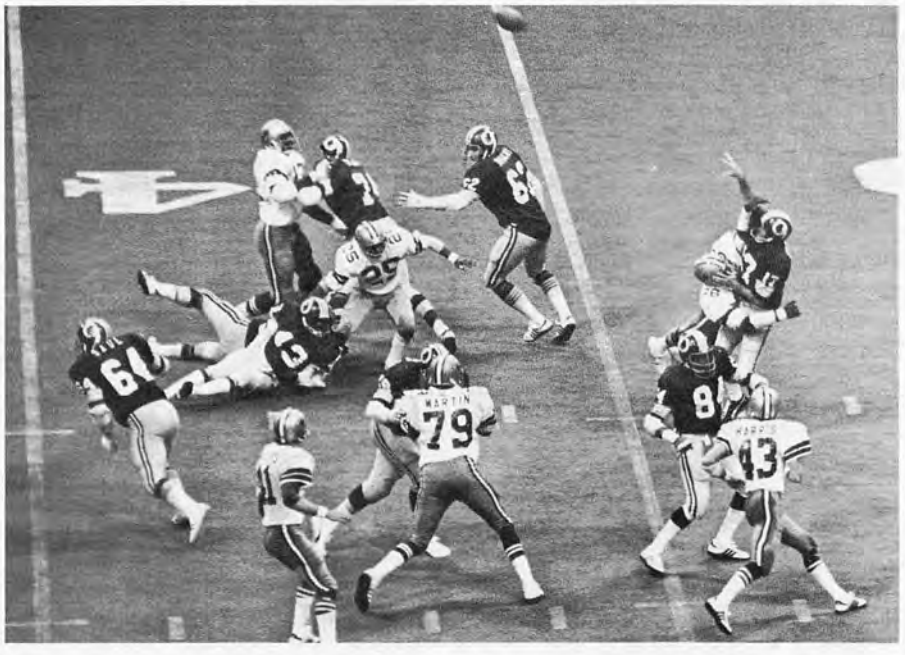

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Numbers

Standings

AFC East	W	L	T	Pct.	Pts.	OP
Baltimore	11	3	0	.786	417	246
New England	11	3	0	.786	376	234
Miami	6	8	0	.429	263	264
N.Y. Jets	3	11	0	.214	169	383
Buffalo	2	12	0	.143	245	363
AFC Central						
Pittsburgh	10	4	0	.714	342	138
Cincinnati	10	4	0	.714	335	210
Cleveland	9	5	0	.643	267	287
Houston	5	9	0	.357	222	273
AFC West						
Oakland	13	1	0	.929	350	237
Denver	9	5	0	.643	315	206
San Diego	6	8	0	.429	248	285
Kansas City	5	9	0	.357	290	376
Tampa Bay	0	14	0	.000	125	412
NFC East	**W**	**L**	**T**	**Pct.**	**Pts.**	**OP**
Dallas	11	3	0	.786	296	194
Washington	10	4	0	.714	291	217
St. Louis	10	4	0	.714	309	267
Philadelphia	4	10	0	.286	165	286
N.Y. Giants	3	11	0	.214	170	250
NFC Central						
Minnesota	11	2	1	.821	305	176
Chicago	7	7	0	.500	253	216
Detroit	6	8	0	.429	262	220
Green Bay	5	9	0	.357	218	299
NFC West						
Los Angeles	10	3	1	.750	351	190
San Francisco	8	6	0	.571	270	190
New Orleans	4	10	0	.286	253	346
Atlanta	4	10	0	.286	172	312
Seattle	2	12	0	.143	229	429

Scores

American Football Conference
Pittsburgh 21, Houston 0
Baltimore 58, Buffalo 20
Cincinnati 42, New York Jets 3
Kansas City 39, Cleveland 14
New England 31, Tampa Bay 14
Oakland 24, San Diego 0

National Football Conference
Los Angeles 20, Detroit 17
Green Bay 24, Atlanta 20
St. Louis 17, New York Giants 14
San Francisco 27, New Orleans 7
Philadelphia 27, Seattle 10
Washington 27, Dallas 14

Inter-Conference Game
Minnesota 29, Miami 7
Denver 28, Chicago 14

AFC, 16 victories; NFC, 12 victories.

Newsmakers

Kansas City's **Ed Podolak** rushed for 137 yards and scored three touchdowns. Podolak gained 305 yards in 68 carries and scored five touchdowns in his last three games. New England's **Andy Johnson** gained 127 yards in 14 carries and scored touchdowns on runs of 69 and 9 yards.

Oakland's **Ken Stabler** was rested the final game; his backup, **Mike Rae,** threw for 143 yards and three touchdowns. Baltimore's **Burt Jones** threw for 248 yards and three touchdowns but finished second to Stabler in overall passing. Stabler had a 103.7 rating, Jones 102.6.

Minnesota's **Sammie White** caught nine passes, three of them for touchdowns.

Week 15

The Fifteenth Week, December 19, 1976
Divisional Playoffs

Minnesota 35, Washington 20

Conditions: Not a typical December weekend in Minnesota: 38 degrees at kickoff, brilliant sun, and solid turf.

Patterns: The late-season drive that got the Redskins into the playoffs had some people calling coach George Allen's squad "a Cinderella team." The clock struck a figurative midnight on Minnesota's first play from scrimmage. Stu Voigt, Charles Goodrum, and Chuck Foreman blocked right, and Brent McClanahan ran left . . . for 41 yards.

The Hero: McClanahan's 101 yards in 20 carries represented his first 100-yard day.

Turnovers: Washington's Billy Kilmer threw two intercepted passes in the first half. On the first play following each of the interceptions, the Vikings' Fran Tarkenton threw intercepted passes.

Ball Control: Minnesota held it for long periods of time by jamming the ball down the Redskins' throats on 46 running plays that gained 221 yards.

The Kicking Game: Neil Clabo's 46-yard average on seven punts kept Redskins in hole.

Big Plays: The Vikings led 7-3 in the first quarter when Ken Houston and Sammie White went up for a pass on the 2-yard line. Houston tipped the ball and White juggled it twice as he fell to the ground. White held possession and rolled into the end zone.

The Clutch: Washington still entertained hopes of coming back after trailing 21-3 at halftime. But Kilmer threw three incomplete passes on their first series after intermission and the Redskins had to punt.

Washington	3	0	3	14	— 20
Minnesota	14	7	14	0	— 35

Minn—Voigt 18 pass from Tarkenton (Cox kick)
Wash—FG Moseley 47
Minn—White 27 pass from Tarkenton (Cox kick)
Minn—Foreman 2 run (Cox kick)
Minn—Foreman 30 run (Cox kick)
Wash—FG Moseley 35
Minn—White 9 pass from Tarkenton (Cox kick)
Wash—Grant 12 pass from Kilmer (Moseley kick)
Wash—Jefferson 3 pass from Kilmer (Moseley kick)
Attendance—47,221

Tarkenton finds White for touchdown.

Oakland 24, New England 21

Conditions: Postcard weather along the mudflats of San Francisco's East Bay.

Patterns: The table was set for a Raiders' comeback.

The Hero: Oakland's Fred Biletnikoff, 33, caught nine passes for 137 yards, and a touchdown.

Turnovers: Skip Thomas intercepted Russ Francis's pass on Oakland's 6-yard line and returned the ball to the 24; the Raiders marched 76 yards to a 10-7 halftime lead.

Ball Control: The Raiders ran 27 plays to the Patriots' 15 in the fourth quarter.

The Kicking Game. A penalty for illegal motion stalled a New England drive that reached Oakland's 27 with less than five minutes remaining in the game and the Patriots ahead 21-17. Rather than punt for the coffin corner and let the defense take over, the Patriots asked John Smith to attempt a 50-yard field goal. Smith's kick was down the chute . . . but just short.

Big Plays: With 39 seconds remaining in the half, Oakland went ahead on a 31-yard touchdown pass, Ken Stabler to Biletnikoff, ending a drive that began with Thomas's interception. Biletnikoff raced toward the end zone, then slowed down at the 3-yard line, forcing defender Bob Howard to stumble into him. Biletnikoff then leaped over Howard to make a one-handed catch.

The Clutch: New England's Ray Hamilton incurred a roughing-the-passer penalty after Stabler had thrown an incomplete pass on third and 19 with 52 seconds remaining in the game. Oakland was given a first down at New England's 13. A personal foul penalty on Prentice McCray on third and one at the 4 gave Oakland a first down on the 1. Stabler rolled left and dived untouched into the end zone with 10 seconds left.

New England	7	0	14	0	— 21
Oakland	3	7	0	14	— 24

NE—Johnson 1 run (Smith kick)
Oak—FG Mann 40
Oak—Biletnikoff 31 pass from Stabler (Mann kick)
NE—Francis 26 pass from Grogan (Smith kick)
NE—Phillips 3 run (Smith kick)
Oak—van Eeghen 1 run (Mann kick)
Oak—Stabler 1 run (Mann kick)
Attendance—53,045

Jess Phillips scores for New England.

Pittsburgh 40, Baltimore 14

Conditions: Cold and dry on Baltimore's all-dirt surface.

Patterns: If it's the playoffs, it must be Franco Harris. The Steelers' running back gained 132 yards in 18 carries (122 in 15 tries in the first half). In 10 postseason playoffs since 1972, Harris has rushed for 958 yards in 230 carries and scored eight touchdowns.

The Hero: Pittsburgh quarterback Terry Bradshaw, who missed six starts and four games because of injuries during the regular season, was never better, completing 14 of 18 passes for 264 yards and two touchdowns.

Turnovers: The Steelers cashed Bert Jones's two interceptions into first-half field goals. The second field goal, from 25 yards by Roy Gerela, made the score 26-7 with four seconds left in the half.

Ball Control: Pittsburgh ran 65 plays to 53, gaining a divisional playoff record 526 yards against 170. In the third quarter, when the Colts were trying to get back into the game, Baltimore ran 12 offensive plays and gained 33 yards.

The Kicking Game. An ailing groin muscle finally forced Gerela to the side line, but not before he kicked two field goals.

Big Plays: The Steelers had a third and eight at their 24-yard line on the first offensive series. The Colts rotated double coverage to Lynn Swann; Bradshaw had all day to pass and hit Frank Lewis, who was several steps behind Jackie Wallace, with a bomb that produced a 76-yard touchdown.

The Clutch: Pittsburgh faced third-down situations 10 times and converted 9 into first downs.

Pittsburgh	9	17	0	14	— 40
Baltimore	7	0	0	7	— 14

Pitt—Lewis 76 pass from Bradshaw (Gerela kick)
Pitt—FG Gerela 45
Balt—Carr 17 pass from Jones (Linhart kick)
Pitt—Harrison 1 run (Gerela kick)
Pitt—Swann 29 pass from Bradshaw (Gerela kick)
Pitt—FG Gerela 25
Pitt—Swann 11 pass from Bradshaw (Gerela kick)
Balt—Leaks 1 run (Linhart kick)
Pitt—Harrison 10 run (Mansfield kick)
Attendance—60,020

Ernie Holmes sacks Colts' Bert Jones.

Los Angeles 14, Dallas 12

Conditions: 71 degrees . . . even with a hole in the roof.

Patterns: Dee-fense! Dee-fense!

The Hero: Lawrence McCutcheon showed a professional's determination when he forced the ball across the goal line on third down from the 1-yard line for the winning touchdown with 14:11 remaining in the game. McCutcheon went up into a pile and was met by Dallas's Thomas Henderson. McCutcheon came down, lurched to his left, and nosed into the end zone.

Turnovers: McCutcheon's score was set up by a fumble recovery by Fred Dryer at Dallas's 39. Drew Pearson gave up the ball when he was hit by Larry Brooks after catching a four-yard pass from Roger Staubach.

Ball Control: In a game in which there was only 461 yards total offense—250 by Los Angeles, 211 by Dallas—both teams had a lot of plays, the Rams 73 and Dallas 69.

The Kicking Game. With four seconds left, the Rams' Rusty Jackson took a snap from center in his end zone and ran to the right side line as time ran out, giving the Cowboys a safety and two points but clinching the Los Angeles victory. The Rams were wary, especially since Charlie Waters had blocked two punts earlier.

Big Plays: On fourth down and five from Dallas's 18, Tom Dempsey kicked a field goal to tie the score at 10. Dallas's Cliff Harris was penalized for running into the kicker. The Rams took three points off the scoreboard and claimed a first down at the 3-yard line, eventually giving the ball to McCutcheon.

The Clutch: The Cowboys turned Waters's first block into their only touchdown in the second quarter. After Waters's second block, they had the ball on the Los Angeles 17 in the last two minutes. On first down Staubach completed a pass to Butch Johnson, who could get only one foot in bounds as he came down in the end zone.

Los Angeles	0	7	0	7	— 14
Dallas	3	7	0	2	— 12

Dall—FG Herrera 44
LA—Haden 4 run (Dempsey kick)
Dall—Laidlaw 1 run (Herrera kick)
LA—McCutcheon 1 run (Dempsey kick)
Dall—Safety, R. Jackson ran out of end zone
Attendance—62,436

McCutcheon fights his way into end zone.

Week 16

The Sixteenth Week, December 26, 1976
Conference Championships

Oakland 24, Pittsburgh 7

Conditions: 52 degrees and haze over the Oakland hills.

Patterns: The Raiders have a big-play pass personality, but they ran at the Steelers 51 times and threw the ball only 16 times. With runners Rocky Bleier and Franco Harris out with injuries, Pittsburgh's power personality was gone.

The Hero: Oakland quarterback Ken Stabler completed 10 of 16 passes for 88 yards and two touchdowns and his play-calling had an acetylene torch effect on the Steel Curtain.

Turnovers: Oakland's first touchdown was set up by Willie Hall's 25-yard run with an intercepted pass.

Ball Control: Oakland was outgained 237 yards to 228 but had the ball for 68 plays to Pittsburgh's 59. More important, Oakland held possession for 52 of the game's first 81 plays, during which it built a 24–7 lead.

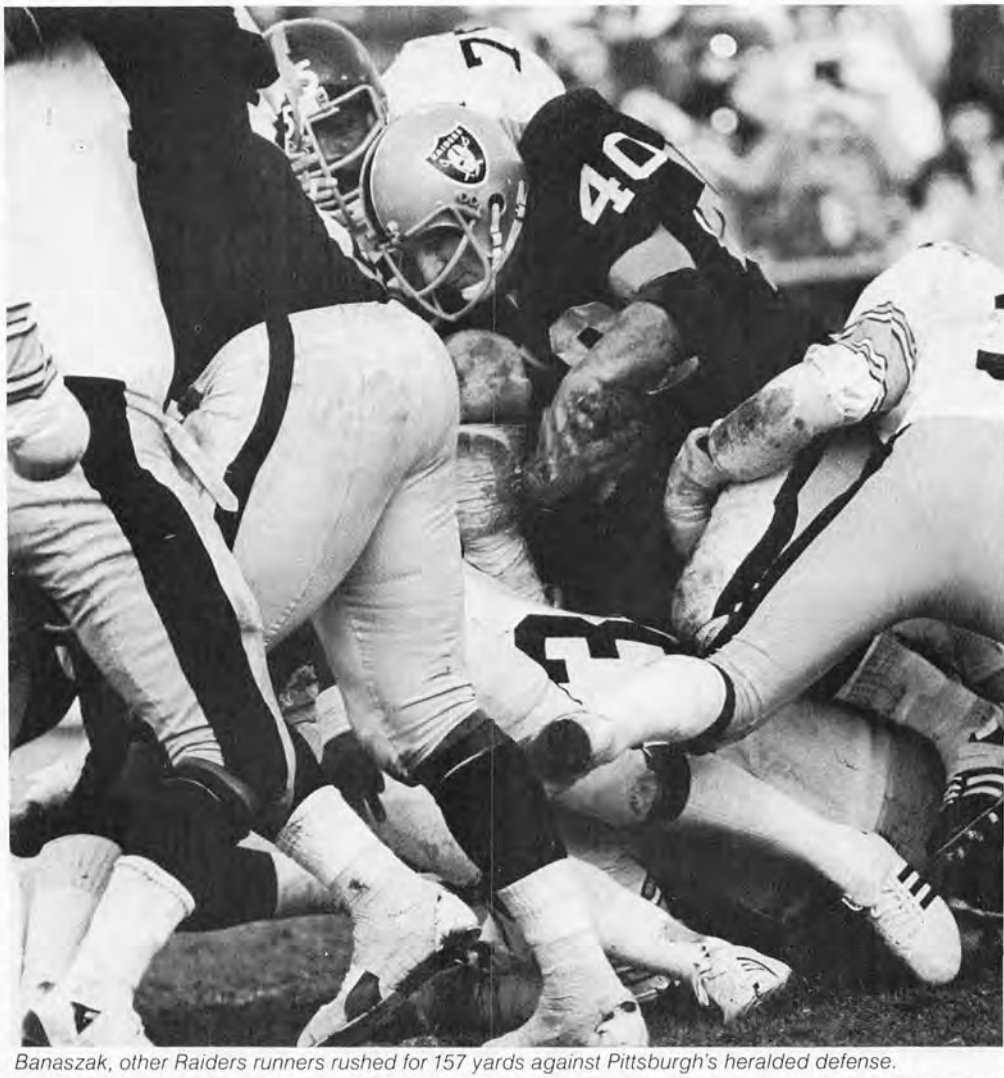
The Kicking Game: Oakland's Hubert Ginn got a piece of Bobby Walden's first punt, which traveled 19 yards to Pittsburgh's 38. The Raiders moved 16 yards and Errol Mann kicked a 39-yard field goal.

Big Plays: Oakland led 10–7 with 19 seconds left in the first half and a first down on the Steelers' 4-yard line. The Raiders lined up with three tight ends; the Steelers replaced two linebackers and braced for a running play with an eight-man line. Stabler faked a run to the right. Tight end Warren Bankston delayed at the line of scrimmage, then slipped to the left against the flow. Bankston was alone when he caught Stabler's pass in the end zone. Oakland took a 17–7 lead to the dressing room.

The Clutch: Stabler faced fourth and one at the Steelers' 24 in the third quarter. He went back to Bankston on the same play that had gotten a touchdown earlier and gained a first down at the 17. That led to a touchdown by Pete Banaszak. The Raiders successfully converted three third downs and one fourth down during the 12-play, 63-yard drive.

Pittsburgh	0	7	0	0	— 7
Oakland	3	14	7	0	— 24

Oak—FG Mann 39
Oak—Davis 1 run (Mann kick)
Pitt—Harrison 3 run (Mansfield kick)
Oak—Bankston 4 pass from Stabler (Mann kick)
Oak—Banaszak 5 pass from Stabler (Mann kick)
Attendance—53,739



Banaszak, other Raiders runners rushed for 157 yards against Pittsburgh's heralded defense.

Bankston's catch made it 17-7 at halftime.

Matuszak forced Bradshaw to pass early.

Minnesota 24, Los Angeles 13

Conditions: 12 degrees at kickoff with a wind-chill factor of 12 below, but lots of sun.

Patterns: The Rams double-teamed Minnesota with offense and defense but were beaten by the Vikings' special teams.

The Heroes: Minnesota running back Chuck Foreman scored a touchdown and gained 118 yards in 15 carries and caught five passes for 81 yards; Minnesota cornerback Bobby Bryant ran a blocked field goal back for a touchdown and intercepted two passes, the second on a pass play that could have given the Rams the lead.

Turnovers: In the fourth quarter, Los Angeles's Fred Dryer knocked the ball out of Fran Tarkenton's hands; it bounced to Jack Youngblood, whose eight-yard return put the Rams on Minnesota's 16 and set up their second touchdown.

Ball Control: Los Angeles outgained Minnesota 336–267 in total offense. The Rams controlled the ball for more than 12 minutes of the first quarter but came away trailing 7–0.

The Kicking Game: Los Angeles marched 53 yards to the Minnesota 1 the second time it had the ball. On fourth down and inches for a touchdown, the Rams decided to kick. Tom Dempsey's field goal attempt was blocked by Nate Allen. Bryant then picked up the bouncing ball and ran 90 yards for a score. The Vikings blocked a Rusty Jackson punt (setting up a field goal) and deflected another.

Big Play: On the first series of the third quarter, Foreman broke through on a quick opener, faked Bill Simpson, and ran 62 yards before being shoestring-tackled by Rod Perry. Foreman scored two plays later.

The Clutch: The Vikings led 17–13 but needed a first down. Quarterback Fran Tarkenton, under pressure, hit Foreman with a short pass over the middle. Foreman broke two tackles and went down the side line for a 57-yard gain that put the ball on the Rams' 12 with 1:57 left. Sammy Johnson ran 12 yards for the clinching touchdown.

Los Angeles	0	0	13	0	— 13
Minnesota	7	3	7	7	— 24

Minn—Bryant 90 blocked field goal return (Cox kick)
Minn—FG Cox 25
Minn—Foreman 2 run (Cox kick)
LA—McCutcheon 10 run (kick failed)
LA—H. Jackson 5 pass from Haden (Dempsey kick)
Minn—Johnson 12 run (Cox kick)
Attendance—47,191

Allen (25) blocked Dempsey's field goal, detonating Bryant's 90-yard return for a touchdown.

Fielding Tarkenton's fumble, Youngblood ran to 8-yard line, getting Rams back in contention.

The 57-yard pass that set up Rams' execution: Foreman evaded defenders and took off.

Super Bowl XI

The Seventeenth Weekend, January 9, 1977

▶ *A stunning hit by Jack Tatum (hidden behind George Atkinson) separated Sammy White from his helmet, but White held onto the ball for a 14-yard gain in the third quarter.*

Otis Sistrunk slammed into Vikings' Fran Tarkenton as he tried to pass in the third quarter.

"We kept Tarkenton in and made him throw over our big guys. He was throwing, you know, bloopers."
Phil Villapiano, *Raiders' linebacker*

"It's just possible some of the absence of Tarkenton's effectiveness was due to our defense."
John Madden

"I'm disappointed. You roll the dice for three hours before seventy-five million people, and if you win you're remembered, if you don't, you're losers."
Fran Tarkenton, *Vikings' quarterback*

Oakland 32, Minnesota 14

Afterward it all seemed inevitable. The Minnesota Vikings had folded up for the fourth consecutive time. The Oakland Raiders' brutal offensive line had crushed the Vikings' defense under a Super Bowl record of 266 rushing yards, and quarterback Ken Stabler had flicked out just enough of his unerring darts to turn physical dominance into a scoreboard rout. The game had looked like a practice scrimmage, with Minnesota holding the dummies.

But the fact is the inevitable was not obvious as the game's opening kickoff went into the air. The Vikings are an imponderable aggregation. They have spent the last decade winning games in which they seem to be absorbing a terrible beating. Just two weeks before Super Bowl XI they had spent the NFC championship getting trampled from one end of the field to the other by the Los Angeles Rams, only to unaccountably emerge at the end of the game with the greater total of points.

Partly this long Vikings' tradition of harrowing survival seems due to divine intervention. But there are definite elements of their success that can be seen on the field. One is that they depend on the game-breaking turnover. Over the years they have won many of their biggest games on an odd assortment of blocked kicks, heads-up interceptions, and unlikely fumble-lateral touchdowns. Minnesota seems the land of serendipity.

Also, the Vikings' defense has mastered the art of giving up all but the last yard or so on the field. Many teams move on Minnesota, but few do much scoring. The Vikings' mystique of impenetrability inside their own 10-yard line has become an important psychological advantage.

Finally, it so happens the Vikings suit up one of the more amazing athletes in NFL history. Chuck Foreman can do nearly anything outside "the pit" better than nearly anybody else in the league today. With a few hip whips, shoulder dips, leg jerks, head dekes, running spins, and full-speed leaps, Foreman has made up for 60 minutes of general Vikings' lethargy more than a few times.

The Oakland Raiders, then, went out to rectify their reputation as big-game gas freaks against an opponent of maddening elusiveness. The Raiders knew they could

26
S. WHITE

Davis scooted 35 yards to Madden's cheers.

pound up and down the field on Minnesota. They also knew that somehow it might not be enough.

It was, of course, a great comfort to Oakland to know that it could plow off the left side almost at will. Guard Gene Upshaw, tackle Art Shell, and, often, tight end Dave Casper combined to embarrass Minnesota tackle Alan Page, end Jim Marshall, and linebacker Wally Hilgenburg.

"The Vikings are a vanilla team," said Upshaw afterward. "They never change anything. They line up and they say, 'Here's Marshall, here's Page. Here we are, come and get us.' So we came and got them."

Page was even more direct. "I should've stayed home and had them mail me my check," he said.

The biggest beneficiary of this upfront mismatch was Oakland running back Clarence Davis, who skipped gleefully past prone Vikings to a career high of 137 yards on an 8.5-yard average. The plays all looked as if they were called "Clarence off left tackle." In the decisive first half, when Oakland eased out to a 16-0 advantage, the Raiders went left on 26 out of 33 running plays. As quarterback Stabler summed it up, "When you have the horses, you ride them."

But running all over the Rose Bowl was never going to win Oakland a trophy—not unless they also dealt with Foreman.

Thus a non-event was one of the most significant aspects of the game. Chuck Foreman didn't do anything. Not that he didn't try, with a wild desperation that erupted in a flood of frustrated emotions at game's end. But the Raiders kept the genie in the bottle. Playing a three-man front, they threw in a couple of stunts and wrinkles Minnesota hadn't seen. Oakland's basic goal was to squeeze off the cracks, bounce Foreman to the outside, and run him into the side line; nobody can snap upfield faster than Foreman. But in this game he never got the chance.

Moreover, the neutrality of the fates toward this game seemed to be underlined very early. Oakland opened the game driving to the Minnesota 11-yard line. There Errol Mann, who had replaced Fred Steinfort, who had replaced legend George Blanda, missed a 29-yard field goal attempt.

Blanda, watching from the stands, must have mused at that moment whether he could have made the kick. Gone from the Raiders and out of football after 26 seasons, he had been released during training camp. Steinfort was a fifth-round draft choice and heir apparent; he won the job. He was injured, however, and 10-year veteran Mann was picked up from the Detroit Lions.

The usually reliable Oakland kicking game lagged again minutes later. Two-time AFC punting champion Ray Guy suffered the first blocked punt of his career. Reserve linebacker and special teams' terror Fred McNeill broke through for the block, and the ball sailed backwards towards the Raiders' goal with Vikings' cornerback Bobby Bryant in greedy pursuit. Then suddenly, incredibly, the ball bounced high and backward, over Bryant's head. It was downed by Guy on the 2.

Minnesota was two yards from a touchdown. Foreman gained one yard. On second down, Tarkenton handed to Brent McClanahan. Linebacker Phil Villapiano slammed into him and the ball came loose; Villapiano recovered.

By taking the football at their own 3 and blasting it out to drive 97 yards to the game's first score, the Raiders took over. On third down after Villapiano's fumble recovery, halfback Clarence Davis ran to daylight off the left side of Shell and Upshaw and sprinted 35 yards down the side line in front of coach John Madden and the Raiders' bench. Ten plays later, Mann redeemed himself, kicking a 24-yard field goal to give Oakland a 3-0 lead.

By the middle of the second quarter the Raiders had only that 3-0 lead to show for almost total dominance of the field. Then they unsheathed their made-to-order goal line weapon.

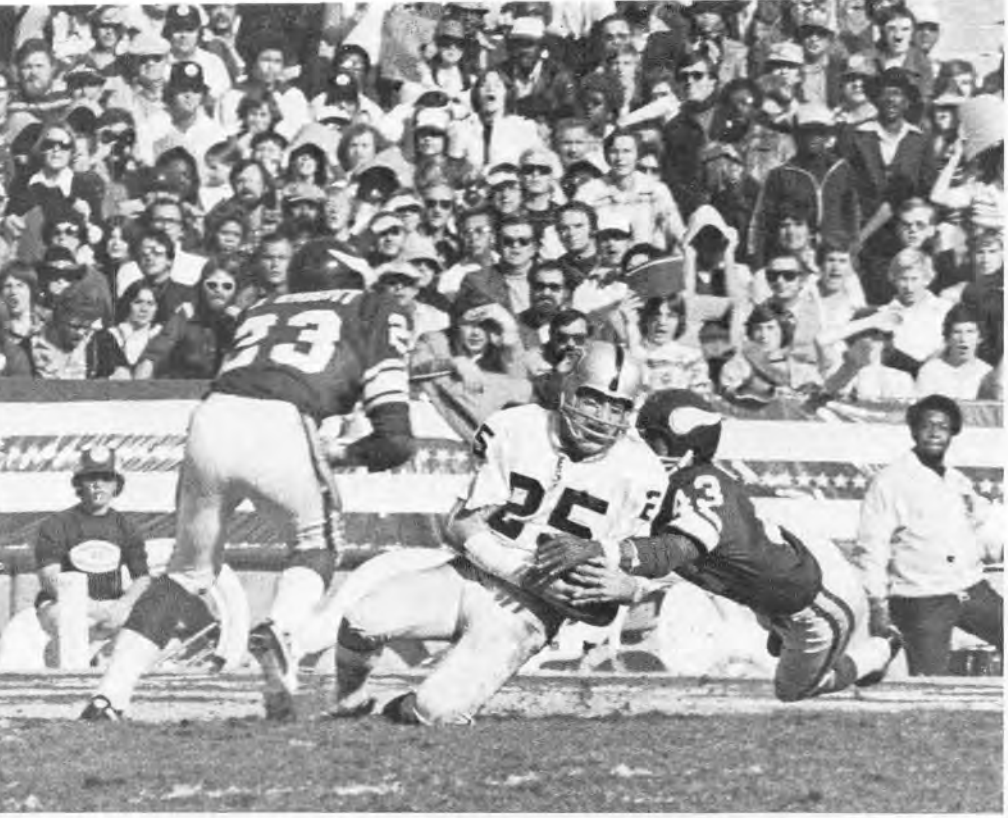
Raiders' wide receiver Fred Biletnikoff can't run or block particularly well. He catches everything that hits his stickum, however. On third and three from the Vikings' 6, Biletnikoff couldn't run away from perfect coverage by Vikings' cornerman Nate Wright. But Stabler put the ball very high and very away, the only place that Wright couldn't touch it, and Biletnikoff glommed it going out of bounds at the 1. On first down, Stabler used play-action and dumped an easy touchdown pass to tight end Casper, who was all alone in the end zone.

The Raiders were at the door again late in the second quarter. On first down at the Vikings' 18 yard line, Stabler watched Biletnikoff try to maneuver free from Wright once more. Stabler put the ball down around the ankles and Biletnikoff came up with it at the 1. This time Pete Banaszak, Oakland's short-yardage specialist, punched it over and following Mann's conversion, the

"We don't worry about our plays. We have complete confidence in Stabler."
Gene Upshaw, *Raiders' guard*

"The team was magnificent. It dominated the entire game. It would have dominated any team today."
Clarence Davis, *Raiders' wide receiver*

▶ *Wide receiver Fred Biletnikoff slid into the 1-yard line with a pass from Ken Stabler; one play later, tight end Dave Casper caught another Stabler pass for the Raiders' first touchdown of the game.*



Raiders led 16-0.

Tarkenton's eight-yard pass to Sammy White got Minnesota on the scoreboard in the third quarter. One of the game's most prolific passers ever, he had to put the ball in the air every series as the fourth quarter began. Scrambling from his own 37 on third down, under pressure from blitzing linebacker Ted Hendricks of the Raiders, Tarkenton threw for Foreman but Willie Hall of Oakland intercepted.

Ken Stabler after a turnover is a force to be dreaded. He ran two running plays and then went back to Biletnikoff on third down. The veteran wide receiver took Wright of the Vikings to the side line and then turned in, taking Stabler's pass and heading downfield. Biletnikoff will be remembered as one of the greatest of receivers for reasons other than his speed, however, and the Vikings ran him down at the 2 after a 48-yard pass play. Banaszak scored his second touchdown of the game from there and after another Mann conversion the Raiders were in command, 26-7.

Minnesota fought back. It made two first downs to the Oakland 28. There, for all practical purposes, the Super Bowl ended. Right cornerback is where Willie Brown has played in pro football for most of the last 14 seasons. Much of the technique all cornerbacks use today began with players such as Willie Brown. Tarkenton took a little off a sideline pass into Brown's area and the ageless veteran intercepted. Ahead of him lay nothing but 75 yards of the finest natural grass in Southern California. Tarkenton made a game dive trying to stop him, but Brown waltzed to a 75-yard touchdown, a Super Bowl record and the Raiders' last score of the game.

Bob Lee replaced Tarkenton at quarterback for the Vikings and got them one more touchdown on a 13-yard pass to tight end Stu Voigt. Time ran out on Minnesota for the fourth time in a Super Bowl and Oakland was the easy victor, 32-14.

Hendricks and defensive end John Matuszak lifted Madden, the Raiders' hefty coach, to their shoulders and attempted to carry him from the field. His weight was too much for them, however, and he tumbled to the turf. ''That's the toughest job Oakland has had today,'' NBC's Curt Gowdy joked.

In the locker room, Madden said he would

attend the AFC-NFC Pro Bowl in Seattle eight days later. ''Don't I always go to the Pro Bowl?'' he asked. ''I coach the Raiders for the season, then I coach the American Conference in the Pro Bowl.''

This time he would be merely a visitor, however.

''We were able to watch things in the Pro Bowl,'' he said. ''We were able to look at people to see if there were things in common, to get a profile of an all-pro. We thought it might help us along the way.

''Also, we had several Super Bowl players every year and, in our conference [the AFC] they almost always had just won the game. They talked about the things they did leading up to the game and, from those conversations, we learned how to prepare for the Super Bowl.''

For three straight years, Oakland had lost the AFC championship game, sending Madden and his staff to the Pro Bowl as AFC coaches but denying the Raiders a trip to the Super Bowl. And for 14 years, managing general partner Al Davis had worked for a Super Bowl title. In 1968, he had watched his nervous, overmatched AFL champions lose to the Green Bay Packers 33-14. Now he was boss of pro football's champions. ''Maybe it's better we didn't win it all before this,'' he said in the locker room, holding the handsome Vince Lombardi trophy. ''You worry about reaching the pinnacle of life too early.''

Madden said, ''It was the right time for us. We worked hard. We waited a long time. We were due. It was our turn. But the nicest thing is that it happened. Sometimes you work hard, and you are due and it is your turn, and it doesn't happen.''

The game had a huge stadium and television audience, and they were treated to one of the most spectacular of halftime shows. A total of 103,424 tickets were sold for the game at the Rose Bowl and 100,421 were used; there were 3,003 no-shows. NBC's telecast reached an estimated 85,000,000 watching on television.

Walt Disney Studios coordinated the halftime show, an unprecedented stadium-wide card stunt. Fans in their seats and 1,400 Los Angeles school children on the field flipped their colored cards in different sequences of white, red, blue, and green on cue from the public address announcer during a 12-minute spectacular.

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◀ *Tackle Henry Lawrence sealed, guard George Buehler crunched the Vikings' Wally Hilgenberg, and Pete Banaszak scored from the 2 as the fourth quarter began; Willie Hall's interception for Oakland set up the touchdown.*

▲ *Moments later, veteran cornerback Willie Brown intercepted another Vikings' pass and went 75 yards to score.*

▲ *(Inset) Managing general partner Al Davis and Raiders players savored a Super Bowl victory in the locker room after the game.*

"I felt comfortable after Willie Hall's interception. And I felt very comfortable after Willie Brown's."
John Madden

"A lot of us have been through this four times. We're not going to lay down and die, though. If we can, we'll be back for a fifth try."
Carl Eller, *Vikings' defensive end*

STATISTICS

Oakland	0	16	3	13—32
Minnesota	0	0	7	7—14

Oak —FG Mann 24
Oak —Casper 1 pass from Stabler (Mann kick)
Oak —Banaszak 1 run (kick failed)
Oak —FG Mann 40
Minn—White 8 pass from Tarkenton (Cox kick)
Oak —Banaszak 2 run (Mann kick)
Oak —Brown 75 interception return (kick failed)
Minn—Voigt 13 pass from Lee (Cox kick)
Attendance—100,421

TEAM STATISTICS	**Oak.**	**Minn.**
First downs	21	20
Rushing	13	2
Passing	8	15
Penalty	0	3
Third down efficiency	9-19	7-19
Total net yardage	429	353
No. plays	73	71
Avg. gain per play	5.9	5.0
Net Rushing yardage	266	71
No. rushes	52	26
Avg. gain per rush	5.1	2.7
Net yards passing	163	282
Times sacked and yards lost	2-17	1-4
Gross yardage	180	286
Passes att.-comp.-had int	19-12-0	44-24-2
Avg. gain per pass	7.8	6.3
Punts and average	5-32.4	7-37.9
Had blocked	1	0
Fumbles—No. and lost	0-0	1-1
Penalties—No. and yards	4-30	2-25
Return yardage	181	150
Punt returns—No. and yards	4-43	3-14
Kickoff returns—No. and yards	3-47	7-136
Interceptions—No. and yards	2-91	0-0

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING

Oakland	**Att.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Davis	16	137	8.6	35	0
van Eeghen	18	73	4.1	11	0
Garrett	4	19	4.8	13	0
Banaszak	10	19	1.9	6	2
Ginn	2	9	4.5	9	0
Rae	2	9	4.5	11	0
Minnesota					
Foreman	17	44	2.6	7	0
S. Johnson	2	9	4.5	8	0
S. White	1	7	7.0	7	0
Lee	1	4	4.0	4	0
Miller	2	4	2.0	3	0
McClanahan	3	3	1.0	2	0

PASSING

Oakland	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Pct.**	**Yards**	**Long**	**TD**
Stabler	19	12	63.2	180	48	1
Minnesota						
Tarkenton	35	17	48.6	205	26	1
Lee	9	7	77.8	81	20	1

PASS RECEIVING

Oakland	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Biletnikoff	4	79	19.8	48	0
Casper	4	70	17.5	25	1
Branch	3	20	6.7	10	0
Garrett	1	11	11.0	11	0
Minnesota					
S. White	5	77	15.4	20	1
Foreman	5	62	12.4	26	0
Voigt	4	49	12.3	15	1
Miller	4	19	4.8	13	0
Rashad	3	53	17.7	25	0
S. Johnson	3	26	8.7	17	0

Interceptions

Oakland	**No.**	**Yards**	**Long**	**TD**
Brown	1	75	75	1
Hall	1	16	16	0

PUNTING

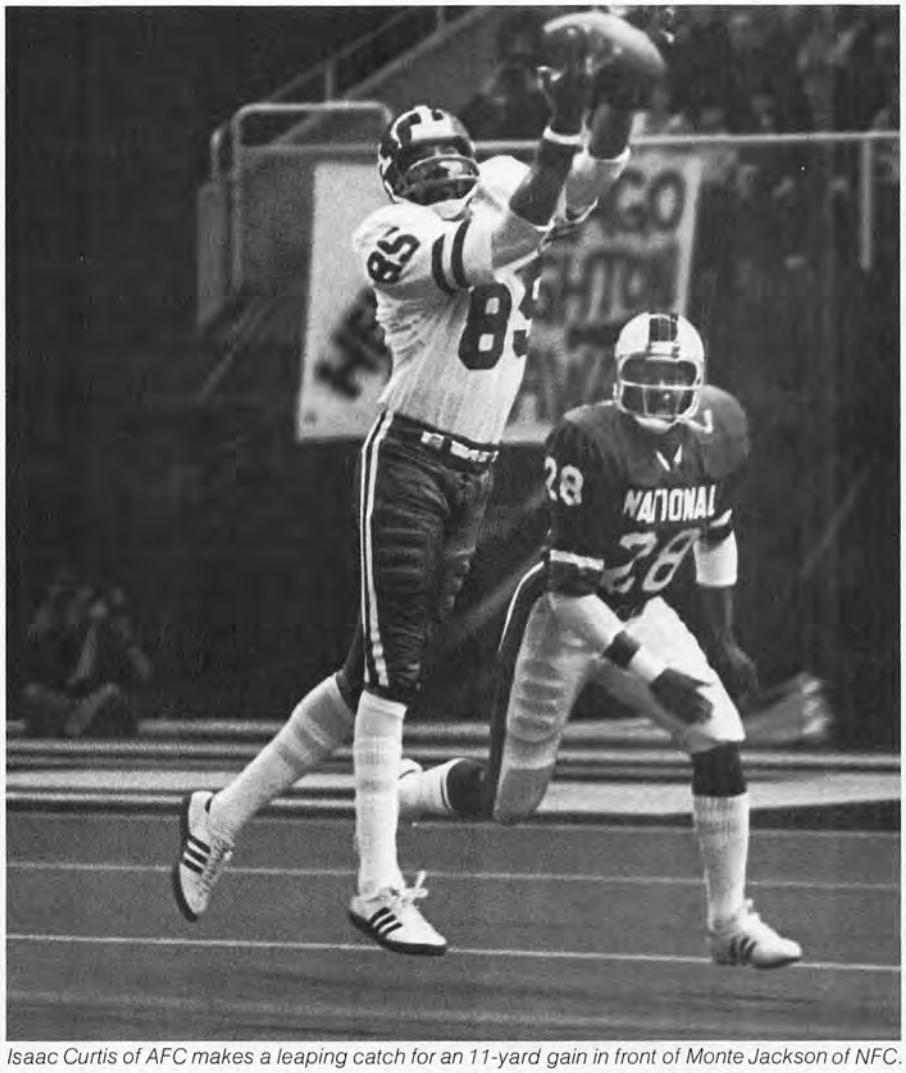
Oakland	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**
Guy	4	162	40.5	51
Minnesota				
Clabo	7	265	37.9	46

FUMBLES

Minnesota
McClanahan 1.

Pro Bowl

The Eighteenth Weekend, Monday, January 17, 1977



Isaac Curtis of AFC makes a leaping catch for an 11-yard gain in front of Monte Jackson of NFC.

Walter Payton of NFC eludes Phil Villapiano of AFC (41) as Lawrence McCutcheon blocks.

AFC 24, NFC 14

Conditions: Rain outside, but living room comfort inside the Kingdome, where a record AFC-NFC Pro Bowl crowd of 63,214 was on hand.

Patterns: The two teams trained in the sunshine of San Diego the week before the game, then flew to Seattle on Friday.

The Hero: Cincinnati's Ken Anderson, taking over at quarterback after the Colts' Bert Jones directed the AFC to a 10-0 lead, passed for two touchdowns that sealed the AFC's fourth victory in the seven-year history of the game. After the NFC closed to 10-7, Anderson hit San Diego's Charlie Joiner with a 12-yard pass and closed out the game with a 27-yard strike to Cliff Branch.

Turnovers: Mel Blount of the Steelers intercepted two passes in the fourth quarter. The first stopped an NFC drive that had reached the AFC 12 with the AFC leading only 17-14. The second interception and Blount's 16-yard return put the AFC on the NFC 27; two plays later Anderson got the final score with his pass to Branch. For his interceptions of Jim Hart passes, Blount was named player of the game. The AFC intercepted six passes in all.

The Kicking Game: Ray Guy's first punt went 48 yards to the NFC 2-yard line. He later had kicks of 46 and 44 yards, keeping the NFC in poor field position.

Big Play: With a first-and-10 at his own 21, NFC quarterback Roger Staubach fumbled a handoff and L.C. Greenwood recovered. Four plays later, Anderson's pass to former Bengals' teammate Joiner made it AFC 17, NFC 7.

The Clutch: Rick Upchurch's 11-yard return of a 34-yard John James punt in the first quarter set up O.J. Simpson's three-yard scoring dash that put the AFC ahead 7-0.

NFC	0	14	0	0—14
AFC	10	7	0	7—24

AFC—Simpson 3 run (Linhart kick)
AFC—FG Linhart 31
NFC—Thomas 15 run (Bakken kick)
AFC—Joiner 12 pass from Anderson (Linhart kick)
AFC—McCutcheon 1 run (Bakken kick)
AFC—Branch 27 pass from Anderson (Linhart kick)
Attendance—63,214

TEAM STATISTICS	**NFC**	**AFC**
First downs	16	19
Rushing	11	11
Passing	5	8
By penalty	0	0
Total yardage	232	280
Net rushing yardage	129	151
Net passing yardage	103	129
Passes att.-comp.-had int.	29-9-6	25-13-1

AFC Preview

Oakland and its challengers—the year ahead

Baltimore Colts
AFC Eastern Division 11-3
Coach: Ted Marchibroda

Colts' Machinery Geared for Super Bowl Ascent

Mitchell (26), Jones (7) lead Colts' offense.

Overview: The Colts' offense is so overwhelming it can be calculated in miles, not yards. In the last two seasons, Bert Jones has established himself as one of the top quarterbacks in the NFL. And with talented associates such as Lydell Mitchell, Roger Carr, and George Kunz, Baltimore gained just under three miles in total offense last year. Coach Ted Marchibroda's early season unhappiness last year, which almost cost him his job until his players interceded, may have catalyzed this young and gifted football team.

Offense: In his fourth year, Jones had some remarkable statistics. He had an almost identical number of passing attempts as the year before (343 in 1976, 344 in 1975) and completions (203 in 1976, 207 in 1975). But whereas his 1975 yardage total was 2,483, he improved that to 3,104 in 1976, making him the only NFL quarterback last year to surpass 3,000 yards. Jones is blessed with an abundance of quality receivers, but perhaps the main reason for his increase in yardage was the development of Carr, the speedy fourth-year pro who led the league in receiving yardage last year. He caught 43 passes for 1,112 yards, a 25.9 yard-per-catch average. One more reason for Jones's excellent yardage total was the continued brilliance of running back Mitchell as both ball carrier and receiver. Mitchell did everything: he blocked well, led the team in rushing with 1,200 yards (fourth best in the NFL), and also led the team in pass receiving with 60. The Jones-Mitchell show had a strong supporting cast, too. Glenn Doughty caught 40 passes, reserve running back Don McCauley caught 34, and tight end Raymond Chester caught 24. Jones got excellent protection from a top offensive line of Kunz and David Taylor at tackles, Robert Pratt and Elmer Collett at guard, and Ken Mendenhall at center. Ken Huff and Forrest Blue are able backup men. Marchibroda is pleased with this offensive lineup . . . but then who wouldn't be? Behind Jones, the Colts have promising youngsters Mike Kirkland and Bill Troup. The team's first draft choice, Randy Burke of Kentucky, is a wide receiver. He doesn't figure to move out Carr or Doughty right away, but should provide excellent reserve strength.

Defense: The Colts won only two games in 1974, but already had begun an energetic rebuilding program through the college draft. Defensive tackle Joe Ehrmann was a number one pick in the 1973 draft. John Dutton, an end, was a number one selection in 1974 and Fred Cook was a second round choice. Along with left tackle Mike Barnes, they gave the Colts one of the most feared pass rushes in the game, one that produced 56 quarterback sacks in 1976, second only to San Francisco's league-leading total of 61. Linebackers Derrel Luce, a rookie last year, Jim Cheyunski, and Stan White should get some help when Tom McLeod returns. He missed all of 1976 with an Achilles tendon injury. Also, cornerback Nelson Munsey, who injured a knee last year, will be back to assist a defensive unit that intercepted just 15 passes. Marchibroda said he's concerned about this area, so the Colts obtained Norm Thompson, a starting cornerback with St. Louis who played out his option. Jackie Wallace and Bruce Laird played well at safety last year. The cornerbacks were Lloyd Mumphord and Nelson Munsey, until Munsey's knee injury forced him to give way to Ray Oldham in the final six games.

Special Teams: Toni Linhart led the league in scoring last year, missing just 1 of 21 field goal attempts inside the 40. David Lee's punting was better than it looks (39.7 average) because he kicked 21 inside the opponents' 20, and only 33 of 59 were returned. Little (5-foot 5-inches) Howard Stevens handled punt and kickoff return duty last year with steadiness.

1977: The Colts were an awesome team last year. They stayed free of injury, so free, in fact, that of the 22 positions on offense and defense, only 24 men wound up starting games. (Don McCauley got one start for fullback Roosevelt Leaks; Oldham had to fill Munsey's spot.) The offense is enough to make any team a contender. If the pass defense improves, the Colts could be a Super Bowl champion.

1976 SCORES	Balt.	Opp.
Sept. 12 at New England	27	13
Sept. 19 CINCINNATI	28	27
Sept. 26 at Dallas	27	30
Oct. 3 TAMPA BAY	42	17
Oct. 10 MIAMI	28	14
Oct. 17 at Buffalo	31	13
Oct. 24 at New York Jets	20	0
Nov. 1 HOUSTON (Monday)	38	14
Nov. 7 at San Diego	37	21
Nov. 14 NEW ENGLAND	14	21
Nov. 22 at Miami (Monday)	17	16
Nov. 28 NEW YORK JETS	33	16
Dec. 4 at St. Louis (Saturday)	17	24
Dec. 12 BUFFALO	58	20
Won 11 Lost 3	**417**	**246**

Divisional Playoff		
Dec. 19 PITTSBURGH	14	40

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	Att.	Yards	Avg.	Long	TD
Lydell Mitchell	289	1,200	4.2	43	5
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD**	**Int.**
Bert Jones	343	207	3,104	60.4	24	9
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Lydell Mitchell	60	555	9.3	40t	3
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**	**Pts.**
Toni Linhart	0	20-27	49-51	109
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Jackie Wallace	5	105	21.0	41	0

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1. Randy Burke	WR	Kentucky
2. Mike Ozdowski	DE	Virginia
3. Choice to St. Louis		
4. Choice to Cleveland through Washington, Miami, and Chicago		
5. Choice to New Orleans		

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense		Defense	
81 Roger Carr	WR	72 Fred Cook	LE
64 David Taylor	LT	63 Mike Barnes	LT
61 Robert Pratt	LG	76 Joe Ehrmann	RT
57 Ken Mendenhall	C	78 John Dutton	RE
66 Elmer Collett	RG	52 Tom MacLeod	LLB
75 George Kunz	RT	59 Jim Cheyunski	MLB
87 Raymond Chester	TE	53 Stan White	RLB
35 Glenn Doughty	WR	42 Lloyd Mumphord	LCB
7 Bert Jones	QB	31 Nelson Munsey	RCB
26 Lydell Mitchell	RB	40 Bruce Laird	LS
48 Roosevelt Leaks	RB	20 Jackie Wallace	RS
2 Toni Linhart	K	49 David Lee	P

Buffalo Bills
AFC Eastern Division 2-12
Coach: Jim Ringo

Ringo Needs More Than Just Juice to Rebuild Bills

Chandler's 61 catches were second in the NFL.

Overview: Buffalo has never had any trouble scoring points, but over the last few years the Bills' defense has had an assortment of problems, and that's where coach Jim Ringo, in his first full year, plans to make some changes.

Offense: O.J. Simpson's sensational ball-carrying exploits are one of the amazing stories in sports. The Juice led the NFL in rushing for the fourth time in the last five years in 1976, gaining 1,503 yards. Now in his ninth season, O.J. needs just 2,678 yards to become pro football's all-time top career rusher. Simpson runs behind a fine wall of Dave Foley, Reggie McKenzie, Mike Montler, Joe DeLamielleure, and Joe Devlin. The Bills used a two-tight end offense for the last six games of 1976 to give Simpson more blocking, but Ringo likely will go back to a normal alignment with the return of Jim Braxton. The 242-pound fullback played only one down in 1976 before suffering a serious knee injury. He's a devastating blocker and talented support runner. An injury also sidelined quarterback Joe Ferguson last year, but he'll be back throwing to Bob Chandler, one of the top pass receivers in the NFL last year with 61 catches. Chandler also caught 10 passes for touchdowns, tying Elbert Dubenion's club record for one season. However, other than Chandler, the Bills did not have a second wide receiver with more than 15 passes. That means Chandler figures to see a lot of double-teaming. Reuben Gant played both wide receiver and tight end for the Bills last year, and John Holland, a speedster, was the man who caught 15. Tight end Paul Seymour, a 245-pounder, caught 16. If Ferguson doesn't come back as as well as expected, Gary Marangi, who accounted for over 1,000 yards in seven starts last fall, or Fred Besana of California, a fifth-round draft choice, could provide help. He's big (6-foot 4-inches, 200 pounds) and has good range. Running back Curtis Brown of Missouri was taken on the third round. Brown is a punishing runner who also can handle kickoffs and punts. The Bills' offensive lineup is talented; a threat to any defense in the NFL.

Defense: Buffalo gave up 363 points in 1976; only four other teams gave up more. Ringo would like to strengthen his starting front four of Ben Williams, Mike Kadish, Marty Smith, and Sherm White, so the Bills selected Phil Dokes on the first round of the draft. Dokes is a 268-pound tackle or end who recorded 214 tackles in three years at Oklahoma State, 28 of them behind the line. Some additional help may come from 6-foot 4-inch Bill Dunstan, who was obtained from the Eagles in an offseason trade. The linebackers—John Skorupan, Merv Krakau, Tom Ruud, and Dan Jilek—likewise may be moved around. The Bills have four experienced men in the defensive backfield. Cornerbacks Mario Clark and Dwight Harrison made numerous tackles at the line of scrimmage last year, and safeties Doug Jones and Tony Greene combined for eight interceptions. Reserve cornerback Keith Moody swiped three. This department will get some additional help if Robert James can come back after missing two seasons. James was an all-pro cornerback in 1972, 1973, and 1974, but a serious knee injury has sidelined him since. The Bills' improvement hinges greatly on the defense.

Special Teams: George Jakowenko hit 12 of 17 field goals last year, including 4 of 7 between the 40 and 50. But the Bills also have Neil O'Donoghue, a 6-foot 6-inch placekicker they drafted out of Auburn. They also have the best punter in the league by average, Marv Bateman. His 42.8 average, however, was only 29.0 when returns were subtracted. Moody handled punt and kickoff returns well but without any game-breaking ability. Rookie Brown may get a chance here.

1977: Simpson started out slowly last year after reporting late. That he won the rushing title again is tribute to his remarkable skills. He closed the season showing more than ever before: an NFL record 273 yards against Detroit, 203 against Miami, and 171 against Baltimore. If O.J. continues at that pace, the Bills' won-lost record will be the beneficiary.

1976 SCORES	Buff.	Opp.
Sept. 13 Miami (Monday)	21	30
Sept. 19 HOUSTON	3	13
Sept. 26 at Tampa Bay	14	9
Oct. 3 KANSAS CITY	50	17
Oct. 10 at New York Jets	14	17
Oct. 17 BALTIMORE	13	31
Oct. 24 NEW ENGLAND	22	26
Oct. 31 NEW YORK JETS	14	19
Nov. 7 at New England	10	20
Nov. 15 at Dallas (Monday)	10	17
Nov. 21 SAN DIEGO	13	34
Nov. 25 at Detroit (Thanksgiving)	14	27
Dec. 5 at Miami	27	45
Dec. 12 at Baltimore	20	58
Won 2 Lost 12	**245**	**363**

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	Att.	Yards	Avg.	Long	TD
O. J. Simpson	290	1,503	5.2	75	8
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD**	**Int.**
Joe Ferguson	151	74	1,038	49.0	9	1
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Bob Chandler	61	824	13.5	58	10
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**	**Pts.**
Bob Chandler	10	0	0	60
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Tony Greene	5	135	27.0	101	1

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1.	Choice to Cincinnati		
	Phil Dokes	DT	Oklahoma State
	from Detroit		
2.	Choice to Seattle through Dallas		
3.	Curtis Brown	RB	Missouri
	John Kimbrough	WR	St. Cloud State
	from Cleveland		
4.	Jimmy Dean	DT	Texas A&M
5.	Fred Besana	QB	California
	Neil O'Donoghue	K	Auburn
	from San Francisco		

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense		Defense	
88 Reuben Gant	WR	77 Ben Williams	LE
78 Dave Foley	LT	71 Mike Kadish	LT
67 Reggie McKenzie	LG	79 Marty Smith	RT
53 Mike Montler	C	83 Sherman White	RE
68 Joe DeLamielleure	RG	55 John Skorupan	LLB
70 Joe Devlin	RT	52 Marv Krakau	MLB
87 Paul Seymour	TE	51 Dan Jilek	RLB
81 Bob Chandler	WR	29 Mario Clark	LCB
12 Joe Ferguson	QB	28 Dwight Harrison	RCB
32 O. J. Simpson	RB	24 Doug Jones	LS
34 Jim Braxton	RB	43 Tony Greene	RS
5 George Jakowenko	K	7 Marv Bateman	P

Cincinnati Bengals
AFC Central Division 10-4
Coach: Bill Johnson

Bengals Steel for Coup Attempt in AFC Central

Anderson passed for 2,367 yards, ran for 134.

Overview: The Bengals were probably the best non-playoff team in the NFL last year. The unfortunate thing for Cincinnati fans was that their team had to play in perhaps the toughest division in the league—the AFC Central. Thus their 10-4 record wasn't good enough, because two of the defeats came at the hands of eventual champion Pittsburgh. Still, it was an impressive debut for coach Bill Johnson and his new staff.

Offense: The Bengals produced some excellent numbers last year: 2,367 yards passing and 19 touchdown passes by Ken Anderson; 1,296 yards rushing by two running backs, Boobie Clark and Archie Griffin; an average of 307 yards a game in total offense; and 41 catches by Isaac Curtis. Actually, Anderson had an off season—for him. He had 14 passes intercepted and was sacked 34 times. His offensive line includes four first-round draft choices—Rufus Mayes, John Shinners, Bob Johnson, and Vern Holland. Left tackles Mayes, center Johnson, right tackle Holland, and right guard Dave Lapham started every game. Shinners started 13, and he alternated with rookie Glenn Bujnoch as messengers. They call the line the Ken Anderson Protection Service, and it averages seven years NFL experience. The offensive attack centers around Anderson, but Griffin, the exciting 5-foot 9-inch double Heisman winner from Ohio State, just may be the key to 1977. He began to develop late in 1976, finishing with 625 yards rushing. Thirteen of Anderson's 19 touchdown passes were split almost evenly between tight end Bob Trumpy and Curtis, who is one of the finest long threats in the NFL. To bolster the attack a bit, the Bengals used a first-round draft choice to select Michigan State tight end Mike Cobb, who stands 6-foot 5-inches and weighs 243 pounds. Cincinnati chose Ohio State fullback Pete Johnson on the second round. Through judicious trading, the Bengals had 18 selections in the 12 rounds of the draft, tying them with Pittsburgh for the most this year.

Defense: Coy Bacon had an astonishing season in 1976. The 35-year-old defensive end led the league in quarterback sacks with 26—one fewer than the entire Bengals' *team* had in 1975—and he anchored an aging, although strong, defensive line. To strengthen the four down positions, Cincinnati drafted two defensive tackles on the first round. Eddie Edwards and Wilson Whitley are their names, and they could start if Bob Brown, Gary Burley, or Ron Carpenter show any signs of weakness. Burley is the only youngster in the line. He was a third-round draft choice in 1975 but missed all of the season with a leg injury. He played well alongside the 37-year-old Brown in 1976. Bacon's backup, Bill Kollar, is coming off a foot injury. Johnson is happy with his linebackers. One of them is Pro Bowler Jim LeClair and two others are very young—Bo Harris, 25, and Reggie Williams, 22. Johnson was delighted with the play of his defensive backfield in 1976. Lemar Parrish, Ken Riley, Tom Casanova, and Marvin Cobb represent a blend of youth and experience. Riley intercepted nine passes at cornerback. Casanova, the strong safety, intercepted five and Cobb, the free safety, got three. In all, the Bengals had 26 interceptions. The only real question mark on defense arises on the line.

Special Teams: Willie Shelby, Parrish, and Casanova shared the punt return duties. Shelby was the top kickoff returner with an average of 25.4 yards per return, which included a 97-yard touchdown. The punting is handled well by Pat McInally, although the Bengals did draft some insurance on the tenth round in Bob Bialik of Hillsdale College in Michigan. Rookie Chris Bahr hit 14 of 27 field goals, including three over 40 yards and two over 50.

1977: Besides the two losses to the Steelers last year, Cincinnati lost by a point to Baltimore and by 15 to Oakland. However, a schedule that has only one rugged game other than those within the AFC Central—Minnesota on November 13—favors the Bengals. With a potent offense and a solid defense, Cincinnati could supplant the Steelers in the AFC Central.

1976 SCORES	Cin.	Opp.
Sept. 12 DENVER	17	7
Sept. 19 at Baltimore	28	3
Sept. 26 GREEN BAY	28	7
Oct. 3 at Cleveland	45	24
Oct. 10 TAMPA BAY	21	0
Oct. 17 at Pittsburgh	6	23
Oct. 24 at Houston	27	7
Oct. 31 CLEVELAND	21	6
Nov. 8 LOS ANGELES (Monday)	20	12
Nov. 14 HOUSTON	31	27
Nov. 21 at Kansas City	27	24
Nov. 28 PITTSBURGH	3	7
Dec. 6 at Oakland (Monday)	20	35
Dec. 12 at New York Jets	42	3
Won 10 Lost 4	**335**	**210**

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	**Att.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Boobie Clark	151	671	4.4	24	7
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD** **Int.**
Ken Anderson	338	179	2,367	53.0	19 14
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Isaac Curtis	42	771	18.7	85	6
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**		**Pts.**
Chris Bahr	0	14-27	39-42		81
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Ken Riley	9	141	15.7	53	1

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1.	Eddie Edwards from Buffalo	DT	Miami
	Wilson Whitley from Philadelphia	DT	Houston
	Mike Cobb	TE	Michigan State
2.	Pete Johnson	RB	Ohio State
3.	Mike Voight	RB	North Carolina
4.	Ricky Walker from Tampa Bay	TE	UCLA
	Mike Wilson	T	Georgia
	Jerry Anderson from St. Louis	DB	Oklahoma
5.	Ray Phillips	LB	Nebraska

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense		**Defense**	
86 John McDaniel	WR	67 Gary Burley	LE
71 Rufus Mayes	LT	78 Bob Brown	LT
64 John Shinners	LG	70 Ron Carpenter	RT
54 Bob Johnson	C	79 Coy Bacon	RE
62 Dave Lapham	RG	53 Bo Harris	LLB
76 Vernon Holland	RT	55 Jim LeClair	MLB
84 Bob Trumpy	TE	57 Reggie Williams	RLB
85 Isaac Curtis	WR	20 Lemar Parrish	LCB
14 Ken Anderson	QB	13 Ken Riley	RCB
45 Archie Griffin	RB	37 Tom Casanova	LS
42 Boobie Clark	RB	24 Marvin Cobb	RS
10 Chris Bahr	K	87 Pat McInally	P

Cleveland Browns
AFC Central Division 9-5
Coach: Forrest Gregg

Greg and Gregg Hope to Keep Browns on the Rise

Greg Pruitt seeks a third 1,000-yard season.

Overview: Only New England's reversal from a 3-11 record in 1975 to an 11-3 record last year was more dramatic than the turnaround of the Browns. Also 3-11 in 1975, the Browns under Forrest Gregg improved to 9-5, and that included an 18-16 surprise of Pittsburgh.

Offense: The Browns took most of the kickoff and punt return duty off Greg Pruitt's 5-foot-9 frame and he responded with an impressive offensive performance: 1,000 yards rushing, 45 pass receptions for 341 yards, and fine all-around play. Brian Sipe's performance at quarterback after Mike Phipps was hurt resulted in a standout season for the former San Diego State star. Sipe hit 57 percent of his passes for 17 touchdowns. His receivers, Reggie Rucker, Pruitt, and Paul Warfield had 49, 45, and 38 catches, respectively. However, the tight end position was hurt after ten games last season when Oscar Roan went out with a sprained ankle after catching 15 passes. His replacement, Gary Parris, caught just five passes. Both will be challenged by a rookie, 6-foot 5-inch, 237-pound Blane Smith of Purdue. In addition to Pruitt's ball-carrying exploits, Cleo Miller rushed for 613 yards and Larry Poole averaged 4.6 yards per carry on 78 attempts, giving the Cleveland offense a lot more zing than in 1974 and 1975, when the Browns won a two-year total of just seven games. A good deal of the credit should go to the offensive line of tackles Doug Dieken and Barry Darrow, guards Pete Adams and Bob Jackson, and center Tom DeLeone. Adams played out his option but failed to sign with another club; if he rejoins the Browns, he'll get some competition from Chuck Hutchison, who missed all of 1976 with a knee injury.

Defense: The Browns were happy with their front four last year, but some changes are imminent because of the retirement of brilliant all-pro left tackle Walter Johnson after 12 seasons. Returning are left end Joe Jones and right tackle Jerry Sherk, who started every game last year. Mike St. Clair is the right end. Eight-year veteran Earl Edwards replaces Johnson. Jones, Edwards, and Sherk average seven years NFL experience. St. Clair, who was a fourth-round draft choice a year ago, played well enough to earn a starting berth in the final four weeks of 1976. Mack Mitchell is a solid backup behind St. Clair. The linebackers—Charlie Hall, Gerald Irons, and Bob Babich—are dependable, but they'll be tested in training camp by newcomer Robert Jackson, a 6-foot 2-inch, 228-pounder from Texas A&M who was the Browns' first-round draft choice. Additional help up front may come from Robert Sims, a fourth-round draft choice from South Carolina State. In the defensive backfield, fifth-year safety Thom Darden swiped seven passes last year. He teams with Terry Brown to give the Browns good deep pass coverage. The Browns held opponents to 145 yards per game passing last year. Clarence Scott and Ron Bolton are the cornerbacks, but Cleveland's other fourth-round choice in the draft was Oliver Davis, a rangy, strong 6-foot 2-inch, 189-pounder from Tennessee State University who could help out the Browns in the defensive backfield.

Special Teams: Greg Pruitt did the punt and kickoff returning in 1975, but coach Gregg lifted those responsibilities in 1976, switching to Steve Holden and Ricky Feacher. They handled both jobs adequately. Don Cockroft has been one of the few men in the NFL who does both the punting and placekicking, and his reputation is one of consistency. He hit 4 of 10 field goals between the 40 and 50 last year, and one went 51 yards. Now, however, the Browns may be the only team in the NFL with *two* combination punters-placekickers. They drafted Ohio State's Tom Skladany, who averaged 42.5 yards per punt and consistently kicked off into the end zone last year, on the second round.

1977: With Mike Phipps gone to Chicago for a first-round draft choice in 1978, Sipe should feel less pressure. Dave Mays will be the backup quarterback. However, the Browns have a brutal schedule this year in the National Football League. They open with Cincinnati, New England, Pittsburgh, and Oakland. Later they must face Los Angeles.

1976 SCORES	Cle.	Opp.
Sept. 12 NEW YORK JETS	38	17
Sept. 19 at Pittsburgh	14	31
Sept. 26 at Denver	13	44
Oct. 3 CINCINNATI	24	45
Oct. 10 PITTSBURGH	18	16
Oct. 17 at Atlanta	20	17
Oct. 24 SAN DIEGO	21	17
Oct. 31 at Cincinnati	6	21
Nov. 7 at Houston	21	7
Nov. 14 PHILADELPHIA	24	3
Nov. 21 at Tampa Bay	24	7
Nov. 28 MIAMI	17	13
Dec. 5 HOUSTON	13	10
Dec. 12 at Kansas City	14	39
Won 9 Lost 5	**267**	**287**

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	Att.	Yards	Avg.	Long	TD
Greg Pruitt	209	1,000	4.8	64	4
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD**	**Int.**
Brian Sipe	312	178	2,113	57.1	17	14
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Reggie Rucker	49	676	13.8	45	8
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**	**Pts.**
Don Cockroft	0	15-28	27-30	72
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Thom Darden	7	73	10.4	21	0

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1. Robert Jackson	LB	Texas A&M
2. Tom Skladany	K	Ohio State
3. Choice to Buffalo		
4. Oliver Davis	DB	Tennessee
Robert Sims	DT	South Carolina State
from Baltimore through Washington, Miami, and Chicago		
5. Choice to San Diego		

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense		Defense	
42 Paul Warfield	WR	64 Joe Jones	LE
73 Doug Dieken	LT	71 Walter Johnson	LT
69 Pete Adams	LG	72 Jerry Sherk	RT
54 Tom DeLeone	C	74 Mike St. Clair	RE
68 Bob Jackson	RG	59 Charlie Hall	LLB
63 Barry Darrow	RT	60 Bob Babich	MLB
81 Oscar Roan	TE	86 Gerald Irons	RLB
33 Reggie Rucker	WR	22 Clarence Scott	LCB
17 Brian Sipe	QB	28 Ron Bolton	RCB
34 Greg Pruitt	RB	24 Terry Brown	LS
30 Cleo Miller	RB	27 Thom Darden	RS
12 Don Cockroft	K	12 Don Cockroft	P

Denver Broncos
AFC Western Division 9-5
Coach: Bob (Red) Miller

Quarterback Job Opening Keeps Broncos Restless

Red Miller will stick with the three-four defense.

Overview: The Broncos had their best record ever in 1976 (9-5), but failed to make the playoffs for the eighteenth season in a row. New head coach Bob (Red) Miller hopes to do something about that, and he inherits a team with a powerful defense and a questionable, though talented offense. The rabid Denver fans also will be out in force.

Offense: Craig Morton, who was obtained from the New York Giants for Steve Ramsey, will be the twenty-sixth quarterback to play in Denver since 1960. But some experts feel that Craig Penrose, who started the Broncos' wins over Kansas City and Chicago in the last two games of 1976, is the most likely starter. When Penrose was injured in the final game of the season, Norris Weese took over for him and played well. So well, in fact, that former New England assistant Miller may also give him a shot at starting, because Weese rushed for 120 yards against the Bears in a 28-14 win. Miller was the offensive coach for the Patriots, who made great use of running quarterback Steve Grogan. Denver also signed free agent veteran Steve Spurrier. The Denver offense is geared around Otis Armstrong, the man who interrupted O.J. Simpson's string of rushing titles with 1,407 yards in 1974. Armstrong's 1,008 yards and 39 pass receptions led Denver last year. He teamed with Jon Keyworth to give the Broncos a strong ground game, which should get even better. Lonnie Perrin is Keyworth's backup. Running back Rob Lytle of Michigan was drafted in the second round and Calvin Culliver of Alabama in the eighth. They'll battle veteran Jim Kiick and Perrin for backup roles. The receivers are solid, with Haven Moses, Rick Upchurch, and Jack Dolbin providing speed and tight end Riley Odoms giving Denver power blocking, good hands, and speed (a 16-yard average on 30 catches). Denver quarterbacks were sacked 48 times last year, third highest total in the league, and Miller has said the most work will be done on the offensive line. Starting tackles Bill Bain and Claudie Minor are back and should be solid; Bain came to Denver in the final week of the 1976 preseason. The returning guards are Tom Glassic, a rookie last year, and Paul Howard. Howard was counted on at guard a year ago, but he missed the season with a back injury. Rookie lineman Steve Schindler, a 6-foot 3-inch, 260-pounder from Boston College, is a candidate for a job. Billy Bryan of Duke is a possibility at center, where Phil Olsen and Bobby Maples divided the playing time last year.

Defense: The Denver defense gave up an average of only 14.4 points a game, only eight touchdowns through the air (tied with Minnesota for the NFL lead), and limited opposing runners to an average of 3.4 yards per rush. And all of this happened despite the loss of superb defensive end Lyle Alzado on the first play of 1976 with a knee injury. The Broncos had thirteen other major injuries, most of them on the line. Miller is a disciple of Chuck Fairbanks's three-four defense, and he will stick with it in 1977. (The Broncos played a four-man line early in 1976.) The candidates for the three line positions are excellent—Alzado, Rubin Carter, Barney Chavous, and Paul Smith, who was a starter until he was injured in the ninth game of 1976. The Broncos also are rich in linebackers with Randy Gradishar, Joe Rizzo, Bob Swenson, and Tom Jackson. Gradishar led the team with 198 tackles. Rizzo suffered a broken jaw late in the season and his spot was taken by Godwin Turk. The defensive backs are equally talented. Left cornerback Louis Wright and safety Bill Thompson are the major talents, but Bernard Jackson, Calvin Jones, and Steve Foley aren't far behind. The Broncos picked off 24 rival passes last year and Jackson ranked third in the AFC last year with seven thefts.

Special Teams: Upchurch led the league in punt returns in 1976 with a 13.7-yard average and four touchdowns to equal the league record. Lonnie Perrin's kickoff return average was 27.0 yards. Weese's punting average was a disappointing 35.6 yards, so Larry Swider of Pittsburgh, the nation's leading college punter last year, was drafted. The placekicker, Jim Turner, was one of the most dependable in the league with 15 of 21 field goals.

1977: If the quarterback situation is settled, Denver will be a serious contender to Oakland in the AFC West.

1976 SCORES	Den.	Opp.
Sept. 12 at Cincinnati	7	17
Sept. 19 NEW YORK JETS	46	3
Sept. 26 CLEVELAND	44	13
Oct. 3 SAN DIEGO	26	0
Oct. 10 at Houston	3	17
Oct. 17 OAKLAND	10	17
Oct. 24 at Kansas City	35	26
Oct. 31 at Oakland	6	19
Nov. 7 TAMPA BAY	48	13
Nov. 14 at San Diego	17	0
Nov. 21 NEW YORK GIANTS	14	13
Nov. 28 at New England	14	38
Dec. 5 KANSAS CITY	17	16
Dec. 12 at Chicago	28	14
Won 9 Lost 5	**315**	**206**

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	Att.	Yards	Avg.	Long	TD
Otis Armstrong	247	1,008	4.1	31	5
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD**	**Int.**
Steve Ramsey	270	128	1,931	47.4	11	13
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Otis Armstrong	39	457	11.7	36t	1
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**	**Pts.**
Jim Turner	0	15-21	36-39	81
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Tom Jackson	7	136	19.4	46t	1

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1. Steve Schindler	G	Boston College
2. Rob Lytle	RB	Michigan
3. Choice to Green Bay		
4. Billy Bryan	C	Duke
5. Choice to New York Jets		

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense		Defense	
80 Rick Upchurch	WR	79 Barney Chavous	LE
75 Bill Bain	LT	68 Rubin Carter	MG
62 Tom Glassic	LG	77 Lyle Alzado	RE
58 Phil Olsen	C	51 Bob Swenson	LLB
60 Paul Howard	RG	59 Joe Rizzo	MLB
71 Claudie Minor	RT	53 Randy Gradishar	MLB
88 Riley Odoms	TE	57 Tom Jackson	RLB
25 Haven Moses	WR	20 Louis Wright	LCB
12 Craig Penrose	QB	43 Steve Foley	RCB
24 Otis Armstrong	RB	36 Bill Thompson	LS
32 Jon Keyworth	RB	46 John Rowser	RS
15 Jim Turner	K	42 Billy Van Heusen	P

Houston Oilers
AFC Central Division 5-9
Coach: O.A. (Bum) Phillips

Oilers' Slippage Could End if Ground Game Improves

Coleman is the Oilers' most consistent back.

Overview: Coming off a 10-4 season in 1975, the 1976 Oilers were geared for great things, and after five games, with a 4-1 record, coach O.A. (Bum) Phillips began dreaming of the Super Bowl. Then the dream collapsed in a heap of injuries. To rebuild from a 5-9 year, the Oilers drafted 10 offensive players in the 14 choices they had. The Oilers lost four games by a total of 11 points in 1976. The defense, meanwhile, remains the strong suit of the club.

Offense: Dan Pastorini's plea to be traded to Los Angeles ended when the Rams got Joe Namath instead, so Pastorini will be back. But he may be playing this year with a lot of new faces. Ronnie Coleman was the only Oilers' running back who wasn't injured last year and he'll be back, as will Fred Willis, who is returning after being sidelined with a dislocated shoulder. The Oilers have a host of backup running backs including nine-year veteran Altie Taylor, eight-year veteran Joe Dawkins, and two rookies drafted on the third round—fullbacks Tim Wilson of Maryland and Rob Carpenter of Miami (Ohio). Another third-round selection was tight end Jimmy Giles of Alcorn State, and a fourth-round choice was wide receiver Warren Anderson of West Virginia State. So the Oilers are building the offense with youngsters. The 1976 collapse came just when Pastorini had suffered bruised ribs and his backup, John Hadl, had taken over. Pastorini still had a fine season, from a statistical standpoint. He had 167 completions in 309 attempts, and 51 passes were caught by Ken Burrough, who just missed becoming the first receiver since the merger of the AFL and the NFL to put together back-to-back 1,000-yard seasons. Despite rib and ankle injuries, Billy Johnson had his finest season with 47 receptions. The offensive line figures to undergo some changes, however. From left to right, the names of 1976 were Greg Sampson, Conway Hayman, Carl Mauck, Ed Fisher, and Elbert Drungo. But their starting positions may be invaded by number one draft pick Morris Towns and number two pick George Reihner. Both stand 6-feet 4-inches tall and weigh around 250 pounds.

Defense: Phillips's three-four defense is considered one of the best in the NFL, and two of the primary reasons for its success are named Curley Culp and Elvin Bethea. The Oilers recorded a team record 50 sacks last year, 14½ by Bethea and 7 by Culp. The team figure was third in the NFL behind San Francisco and Baltimore. The Oilers' linebacking corps is excellent, too. All-pro Robert Brazile, a quick 240-pounder, is the best known of the four. Two others are Steve Kiner and Gregg Bingham. And if people keep saying that linebacker Teddy Washington is underrated, he soon won't be. At the corners are Zeke Moore, and 11-year veteran, and third-year pro Greg Stemrick. Houston's safeties C.L. Whittington and Mike Weger both suffered injuries last year. They return to round out a defense that limited the opposition to 135 yards a game passing last year. The secondary only had 11 interceptions last year, a figure that could stand improvement.

Special Teams: Pastorini was the team's punter last year, but his season average of only 36.7 was not very good. The placekicker was Skip Butler, and his 16 of 27 field goals showed good range: three of eight over the 40 and one of three over the 50. However, the long-range placements may go to Ove Johansson, the Abilene Christian kicker who was drafted on the twelfth round. The punt and kickoff return teams are handled by the fabled Billy (White Shoes) Johnson, who also doubles as a wide receiver. Johnson averaged 10.6 yards per punt return and 22.3 on kickoffs, and he'll get some valuable assistance this year from Coleman and the rookie wide receiver Anderson.

1977: If Pastorini can find some running help and continue to pass well, the offense may finally be able to help the defense, and the Oilers could be a threat. But in the rugged AFC Central that's asking a lot. Don't count the Oilers out, however. The new faces could make a major difference.

1976 SCORES	Hou.	Opp.
Sept. 12 TAMPA BAY	20	0
Sept. 19 at Buffalo	13	3
Sept. 26 OAKLAND	13	14
Oct. 3 at New Orleans	31	26
Oct. 10 DENVER	17	3
Oct. 17 at San Diego	27	30
Oct. 24 CINCINNATI	7	27
Nov. 1 at Baltimore (Monday)	14	38
Nov. 7 CLEVELAND	7	21
Nov. 14 at Cincinnati	27	31
Nov. 21 at Pittsburgh	16	32
Nov. 28 ATLANTA	20	14
Dec. 5 at Cleveland	10	13
Dec. 11 PITTSBURGH (Saturday)	0	21
Won 5 Lost 9	**222**	**273**

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	**Att.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Ronnie Coleman	171	684	4.0	39	2
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD**	**Int.**
Dan Pastorini	309	167	1,785	53.5	10	10
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Ken Burrough	51	932	18.2	69	7
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**	**Pts.**
Skip Butler	0	16-26	24-25	72
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
C. L. Whittington	5	103	20.6	50	0

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1.	Morris Towns	T	Missouri
2.	George Reihner	G	Penn State
3.	Choice to San Francisco		
	Tim Wilson	RB	Maryland
	from Green Bay		
	Jimmy Giles	TE	Alcorn State
	from Miami		
	Rob Carpenter	RB	Miami, Ohio
	from Oakland through Buffalo		
4.	Choice to Kansas City		
	Warren Anderson	WR	West Virginia State
	from San Diego through Miami		
5.	Choice forfeited		

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense		**Defense**	
00 Ken Burrough	WR	71 Joe Owens	LE
73 Greg Sampson	LT	78 Curley Culp	MG
70 Conway Hayman	LG	65 Elvin Bethea	RE
55 Carl Mauck	C	59 Ted Washington	LLB
60 Ed Fisher	RG	57 Steve Kiner	MLB
75 Elbert Drungo	RT	54 Gregg Bingham	MLB
81 John Sawyer	TE	52 Robert Brazile	RLB
84 Billy Johnson	WR	27 Greg Stemrick	LCB
7 Dan Pastorini	QB	22 Zeke Moore	RCB
44 Fred Willis	RB	38 C. L. Whittington	LS
47 Ronnie Coleman	RB	28 Mike Weger	RS
2 Skip Butler	K	7 Dan Pastorini	P

Kansas City Chiefs
AFC Western Division 5-9
Coach: Paul Wiggin

Chiefs Out to Prove They're Not Just Another 5–9 Club

Mike Livingston passed for 2,682 yards in '76.

Overview: When the Kansas City Chiefs finished the 1976 season by beating Cleveland 39-14, coach Paul Wiggin called it "a very special day" because the Chiefs had beaten a team with which Wiggin had spent 11 seasons; because the Chiefs had escaped having the poorest season in their history; because is was the first victory of the season at Arrowhead Stadium. At 5-9, one might think the Chiefs didn't have much to be happy about. But that's not true. This is a team with talent, a team on the way back.

Offense: It was not for lack of offense that the Chiefs were losers last year. Mike Livingston was the number five passer in the NFC with 2,682 yards passing. In addition, MacArthur Lane continued to prove just what Wiggin said last year: "He's simply the best running back-receiver in football." Lane caught 66 passes to lead all NFL receivers, and he also led the Chiefs with 542 yards rushing. Ed Podolak, after averaging 4.2 yards per carry last year, also returns. Podolak suffered a chest injury early in the season and played sparingly in the first five games. In the sixth week, he suffered a hamstring pull, keeping him out of three of the next four games, yet he still gained 127 yards against San Diego and 137 against Cleveland. Woody Green started the first six games, then needed knee surgery. The line features Pro Bowl center Jack Rudnay and four men who play well as a unit—Matt Herkenhoff, Charlie Getty, Tom Condon, and Jim Nicholson. But perhaps the strongest aspect of the offensive line is Walter White, one of the most overlooked yet talented tight ends around. The 218-pound White caught 47 passes last year and used his 4.4 speed for 40 yards to gain 808 yards, an average of 17.2 yards a catch. Flanker Larry Brunson was the long threat last year, averaging just under 20 yards on 33 receptions. And rookie Henry Marshall, a third-round draft choice, had 28 catches and five end-around sweeps for a 20-yard average.

Defense: This is the area that needs the most upgrading. The Chiefs were twenty-seventh in team defense last year. There were many reasons, including age, injury, and circumstance. The few bright spots included rookie left end Whitney Paul, who didn't get a chance to start until midway in the season, and then showed he could be a forceful pass rusher. Rookie Gary Barbaro, a third-round draft choice who won a starting spot opposite safety Tim Gray, was another bright spot. Willie Lee and James Wolf alternated at tackle; Wilbur Young manned the right end position. Veteran linebackers Willie Lanier and Jim Lynch have talked about retiring, but both might be back. Clyde Werner and second-year man Dave Rozumek also return at linebacker. Texas Tech's Thomas Howard was a number three choice at linebacker and could be of assistance. The Chiefs made cornerback Gary Green of Baylor their number one draft choice. He should be of immediate help at left corner. Also back is perennial all-Pro Emmitt Thomas. Wiggin feels eight or nine of 17 rookie selections (in 12 rounds) will make the team. Twelve first-year players made the team a year ago.

Special Teams: The Chiefs got a lot of mileage out of veteran punter Jerrel Wilson, whose 42.0-yard punting average was third best in the league. And Jan Stenerud again proved to be one of the top field goal kickers in the business. He hit 21 of 38, including 7 of 15 between the 40 and 50. Wide receiver Lawrence Williams led the club in kickoff returns with a 27.6-yard average and Brunson handled the punt returns with an excellent 12.5-yard average.

1977: Armed with a new three-year contract, Wiggin can continue his rebuilding job. And without opposition from a retired Len Dawson, Livingston showed he can handle the quarterback job by himself. Tony Adams is around as the backup. The question marks are on defense. Wiggin has no break in the schedule, however. Last year Kansas City played teams such as Pittsburgh, Washington, and Cincinnati. They have to play the Bengals again in 1977, and the Chiefs also get New England and Baltimore, and must play the world champion Raiders twice.

1976 SCORES	K.C.	Opp.
Sept. 12 SAN DIEGO	16	30
Sept. 20 OAKLAND (Monday)	21	24
Sept. 26 NEW ORLEANS	17	27
Oct. 3 at BUFFALO	17	50
Oct. 10 at Washington	33	30
Oct. 17 at Miami	20	17
Oct. 24 DENVER	26	35
Oct. 31 at Tampa Bay	28	19
Nov. 7 PITTSBURGH	0	45
Nov. 14 at Oakland	10	21
Nov. 21 CINCINNATI	24	27
Nov. 28 at San Diego	23	20
Dec. 5 at Denver	16	17
Dec. 12 CLEVELAND	39	14
Won 5 Lost 9	**290**	**376**

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	Att.	Yards	Avg.	Long	TD
MacArthur Lane	162	542	3.3	20	5
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD**	**Int.**
Mike Livingston	338	189	2,682	55.9	12	13
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
MacArthur Lane	66	686	10.4	44	1
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**	**Pts.**
Jan Stenerud	0	21-38	27-33	90
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Kerry Reardon	5	26	5.2	22	0

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1.	Gary Green	DB	Baylor
2.	Tony Reed	RB	Colorado
3.	Thomas Howard	LB	Texas Tech
4.	Mark Bailey from Philadelphia	RB	Cal State-Long Beach
	Andre Samuels	TE	Bethune-Cookman
	Darius Helton from Houston	G	North Carolina Central
	Eric Harris from Washington	DB	Memphis State
5.	Choice to Pittsburgh		

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense			Defense	
89	Henry Marshall	WR	64 Whitney Paul	LE
60	Matt Herkenhoff	LT	72 Keith Simons	LT
77	Charlie Getty	LG	73 James Wolf	RT
58	Jack Rudnay	C	99 Wilbur Young	RE
65	Tom Condon	RG	53 Billy Andrews	LLB
70	Jim Nicholson	RT	63 Willie Lanier	MLB
88	Walter White	TE	51 Jim Lynch	RLB
83	Larry Brunson	WR	15 Kerry Reardon	LCB
10	Mike Livingston	QB	18 Emmitt Thomas	RCB
14	Ed Podolak	RB	46 Tim Gray	LS
42	MacArthur Lane	RB	26 Gary Barbaro	RS
3	Jan Stenerud	K	44 Jerrel Wilson	P

Miami Dolphins
AFC Eastern Division 6-8
Coach: Don Shula

Dolphins Mending, Seek Return to Days of Splendor

Duriel Harris led the NFL in kickoff returns.

Overview: The Miami Dolphins went into the 1976 season knowing basically what their lineup would be. Then the roof began to fall in . . . and it seemed as if it never stopped falling. Eleven Dolphins' players suffered injuries requiring knee surgery; wide receiver Nat Moore broke a leg; Bill Stanfill's neck injury became critical; Manny Fernandez's knee problems may force him to retire. All of the Dolphins' six victories in 1976 came at the expense of four teams—two each against Buffalo, the Jets, and one over New England and Tampa Bay. Three of the opponents had a combined record of 5-37. Despite the lackluster won-loss record, the Dolphins were outscored by only one point, 264-263. Three of the defeats were gut-wrenchers: 20-17 to Kansas City after the Dolphins fumbled into the end zone in overtime, 17-16 to Baltimore when a blocked conversion prevented an overtime, and 17-13 to Cleveland when Griese inexplicably let the clock run out with the ball on the Browns' three-yard line. But Don Shula, the man who fashioned victories in Super Bowls VII and VIII, is still the coach and many of the players on those teams are still around. Miami appears to have the material to rebound from 1976's adversity.

Offense: Quarterback Bob Griese hit nearly 60 percent of his passes last year for 2,097 yards and had only 11 interceptions. The figures are all the more remarkable when you consider the Dolphins frequently trailed and had to pass. Don Strock backs up. Other bright spots returning from last year are running backs Benny Malone and Norm Bulaich, who gained 797 and 540 yards respectively. Bulaich also caught 28 passes. Moore should be back healthy, too. He led the receivers with 33 catches and an 18.9-yard average. Rookie Duriel Harris and second-year man Freddie Solomon showed flashes of brilliance in 1976. Solomon had 27 catches and Harris 22, and Harris also led the NFL in kickoff returns with a 32.9-yard average. The line is experienced: Andre Tillman at tight end, Wayne Moore and Darryl Carlton at tackles, Bob Kuechenberg and Larry Little at guards, and Jim Langer at center. Langer was one of the 11 players who underwent knee surgery.

Defense: Nine of the 11 knee operations were performed on defensive people, and things got worse last spring when starting defensive tackles Randy Crowder and Don Reese were arrested on drug charges. Stanfill may not play again, and Coach Don Shula may be forced back to the "53" defense that featured a three-man line during Miami's Super Bowl years. The ends figure to be last year's top lineman, Vern Den Herder, and Kim Bokamper, a first draft choice last year who showed potential before he suffered a knee injury in the preseason. The team's first-round draft choice, A.J. Duhe of Louisiana State, is the likely nose tackle. The 6-foot-4, 250-pounder is rated a superb prospect and would have been given a good chance to start even if there had been no injuries. The linebackers also were hit by injuries, but Bob Matheson (whose number gave the "53" its name), Steve Towle, Larry Gordon, and Mike Kolen figure to be stable and provide leadership. The defensive backfield likewise figures to get juggled. Safety Charlie Babb had two knee operations in December and is a question mark. Cornerback Tim Foley and safeties Dick Anderson and Barry Hill also had operations. One hope is that Vern Roberson, who led the Canadian Football League in interceptions in 1975 with 10, can help at safety. The Dolphins also have an all-pro cornerback in Ken Ellis, who should help.

Special Teams: Harris and Solomon showed some flair, Harris in kickoff returns and Soloman with a 15.8-yard average per punt return, which would have led the league if he had had one more return to qualify. The 38.2-yard punting of Larry Seiple was adequate, and Garo Yepremian remains the all-time leader in field goal acuracy with a .671 percentage (83 percent inside the 40). He was 16 of 23 in 1976.

1977: Shula has had more than his share of injuries. If more of his luck is good instead of bad this year, Miami could rebound from adversity. But it won't be easy. The schedule includes road games at Cincinnati, St. Louis, and San Francisco.

1976 SCORES	Mia.	Opp.
Sept. 13 at Buffalo (Monday)	30	21
Sept. 19 at New England	14	30
Sept. 26 NEW YORK JETS	16	0
Oct. 3 LOS ANGELES	28	31
Oct. 10 at Baltimore	14	28
Oct. 17 KANSAS CITY	17	20
Oct. 24 at Tampa Bay	23	20
Oct. 31 NEW ENGLAND	10	3
Nov. 7 at New York Jets	27	7
Nov. 14 at Pittsburgh	3	14
Nov. 22 BALTIMORE (Monday)	16	17
Nov. 28 at Cleveland	13	17
Dec. 5 BUFFALO	45	27
Dec. 11 MINNESOTA (Saturday)	7	29
Won 6 Lost 8	**263**	**264**

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	Att.	Yards	Avg.	Long	TD
Benny Malone	186	797	4.3	31	4
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD**	**Int.**
Bob Griese	272	162	2,097	59.6	11	12
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Nat Moore	33	625	18.9	67t	4
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**	**Pts.**
Garo Yepremian	0	16-23	29-31	77
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Ken Ellis	2	40	20.0	40	0

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1.	A. J. Duhe	DT	Louisiana State
2.	Bob Baumhower	DT	Alabama
3.	Choice to Houston Mike Watson from Chicago	T	Miami, Ohio
4.	Choice to Washington		
5.	Mike Michel from Tampa Bay	K	Stanford
	Leroy Harris	RB	Arkansas State

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense		Defense	
89 Nat Moore	WR	77 A.J. Duhe	MG
79 Wayne Moore	LT	72 Bob Heinz	RE
67 Bob Kuechenberg	LG	60 Don Reese	RE
62 Jim Langer	C	58 Kim Bokamper	LLB
66 Larry Little	RG	53 Bob Matheson	MLB
78 Tom Drougas	RT	56 Steve Towle	MLB
87 Andre Tillman	TE	50 Larry Gordon	RLB
86 Freddie Solomon	WR	41 Jeris White	LCB
12 Bob Griese	QB	45 Curtis Johnson	RCB
32 Benny Malone	RB	49 Charlie Babb	LS
31 Norm Bulaich	RB	44 Barry Hill	RS
1 Garo Yepremian	K	20 Larry Seiple	P

New England Patriots
AFC Eastern Division 11-3
Coach: Chuck Fairbanks

Like Cinderella, the Patriots Travel by Land

Cunningham led Patriots in rushing, 824 yards.

Overview: Most coaches say you have to control the lines of scrimmage to win. And that's just what his Patriots did last year. Not only did the Patriots rush for an average of 211 yards per game in 1976, they also limited their foes to 132. Much of the credit goes to Fairbanks's three-four defense. The 11-3 record that resulted was a literal turnaround from the 3-11 of 1975, and made New England the comeback team of the year and a team to watch closely this season.

Offense: The Patriots used a trio of running backs as their main weapons last year. Sam Cunningham (824 yards), Donnie Calhoun (721), and Andy Johnson (699) combined to score 10 touchdowns. But perhaps the reason they were so effective was that quarterback Steve Grogan prevented the defense from stacking up on any one of them by making himself the fourth running back threat. His 12 touchdown runs last year set an NFL record for quarterbacks, and he gained most of his 397 yards in crucial situations. Grogan averaged 6.6 yards a carry. Grogan's passing attack suffered a bit (48 percent completions and 20 interceptions), but he should be improved with a year's experience. Grogan was sacked only 18 times as his offensive line did sterling work. The line includes Pro Bowlers Leon Gray and John Hannah on the left side, 10-year veteran center Bill Lenkaitis, and Sam Adams and Bob McKay or Tom Neville on the right side. Not one of them missed a game in 1976. Since the pass became a weapon of surprise for New England, Grogan was able to hit 18 for touchdowns, and he hit seven different receivers for scores. Johnson led all receivers with 29 catches. Cunningham caught 27, tight end Russ Francis 26, and Darryl Stingley 17. Backup tight end Al Chandler, one of 18 free agents on the squad last year, caught just five passes but three went for touchdowns. Eight of New England's 13 draft choices were offensive players, most of them with good speed. Two were running backs—Horace Ivory of Oklahoma and Dave Preston of Bowling Green. Ivory, selected on the second round, was only the fourth running back taken in the draft. Two other choices were wide receivers, first-round pick Stanley Morgan of Tennessee and Ken Smith of Arkansas-Pine Bluff.

Defense: After experimenting with a four-man line in his first years in the league, Fairbanks switched to the three-four defense in 1974. Last year he started Mel Lunsford at left end, Ray Hamilton at middle guard, and Julius Adams at right end. The linebackers—Steve Zabel, Sam Hunt, Steve Nelson, and Pete Barnes—averaged nearly 240 pounds per man and showed great quickness. New England forced a club-record 50 turnovers and 47 sacks. Perhaps the biggest improvement came where the Patriots needed help the most—the defensive backfield. The porous pass defense of 1975 was solidified quickly in the 1976 draft when Fairbanks went after Mike Haynes and Tim Fox on the first round. Both men responded to the challenge beautifully. Haynes had a spectacular rookie season with eight interceptions, becoming one of the most exciting pass defenders in the NFL. Fairbanks went after more defensive backs in the 1977 draft when he made Raymond Clayborn, a 6-foot 1-inch, 183-pounder from Texas, his first choice and Sidney Brown of Oklahoma his fifth selection.

Special Teams: Haynes became a doubly important man for the Patriots in 1976 when he handled 45 of the 48 punts received by the team and had a fine 13.5-yard return average. The other specialists were equally as good. Mike Patrick booted punts an average of 40.1 yards. John Smith hit 15 of 25 field goals, including 11 of 20 between the 30 and 50.

1977: From various sources—the draft, trades, waiver lists, and through the signing of free agents—Fairbanks groomed the 1976 Patriots into a team that almost defeated the eventual Super Bowl champion Oakland Raiders in the AFC playoffs. If Grogan can hit a few more long passes this year, Fairbanks may get another shot at the Oakland team the Patriots defeated 48-17 during the 1976 regular season.

1976 SCORES	N.E.	Opp.
Sept. 12 BALTIMORE	13	27
Sept. 19 MIAMI	30	14
Sept. 26 at Pittsburgh	30	27
Oct. 3 OAKLAND	48	17
Oct. 10 at Detroit	10	30
Oct. 18 NEW YORK JETS (Monday)	41	7
Oct. 24 at Buffalo	26	22
Oct. 31 at Miami	3	10
Nov. 7 BUFFALO	20	10
Nov. 14 at Baltimore	21	14
Nov. 21 at New York Jets	38	24
Nov. 28 DENVER	38	14
Dec. 5 NEW ORLEANS	27	6
Dec. 12 at Tampa Bay	31	14
Won 11 Lost 3	**376**	**236**
Divisional Playoff		
Dec. 18 at Oakland	21	24

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	Att.	Yards	Avg.	Long	TD
Sam Cunningham	172	824	4.8	24	3
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD**	**Int.**
Steve Grogan	302	145	1,903	48.0	18	20
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Andy Johnson	29	343	11.8	53	4
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**	**Pts.**
John Smith	0	15-25	42-46	87
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Mike Haynes	8	90	11.3	28	0

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1.	Raymond Clayborn from San Francisco	DB	Texas
	Stanley Morgan	WR	Tennessee
2.	Horace Ivory from San Francisco	RB	Oklahoma
	Don Hasselbeck	TE	Colorado
3.	Sidney Brown	DB	Oklahoma
4.	Gerald Skinner	T	Arkansas
5.	Choice to St. Louis		

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense			Defense		
18	Randy Vataha	WR	72	Mel Lunsford	LE
70	Leon Gray	LT	71	Ray Hamilton	MG
73	John Hannah	LG	85	Julius Adams	RE
67	Bill Lenkaitis	C	54	Steve Zabel	LLB
61	Sam Adams	RG	50	Sam Hunt	MLB
66	Bob McKay	RT	57	Steve Nelson	MLB
81	Russ Francis	TE	59	Pete Barnes	RLB
84	Darryl Stingley	WR	24	Bob Howard	LCB
14	Steve Grogan	QB	40	Mike Haynes	RCB
32	Andy Johnson	RB	34	Prentice McCray	LS
39	Sam Cunningham	RB	48	Tim Fox	RS
1	John Smith	K	2	Mike Patrick	P

New York Jets
AFC Eastern Division 3-11
Coach: Walt Michaels

Joe's Gone, Walt's Back, Jets Are Still Winging It

Rookie back Clark Gaines was a bright spot.

Overview: In a season of injury and bad luck, the New York Jets were forced to undergo a dramatic rebuilding program in 1976. As a result, the Jets will field the youngest starting team in football this year. So young, in fact, that the team's leading rusher of a year ago was a rookie free agent who wasn't drafted.

Offense: Clark Gaines is the free agent running back's name. In barely three-quarters of a season, the youngster from Wake Forest became one of the pluses in a season of disappointment. At a time when Joe Namath was ineffective as a passer, Gaines showed flashing feet against defenses who knew he was the primary ball carrier. Gaines responded with 724 yards rushing and a 4.6-yard average, best by any NFL rookie. He also caught 41 passes to lead the club in that department, too. In fact, Gaines started regularly only after Ed Marinaro was injured in the sixth game. If Marinaro's foot heals, the Jets will have two solid backs to run behind a front line of guards Gary Puetz and Randy Rasmussen, center Carrel Austin, and tackle Robert Woods. First round draft choice Marvin Powell of USC is a massive 6-foot 5-inch, 260-pounder who moves quickly, opens holes, protects the quarterback, and figures to start at right tackle. The Jets' running backs in 1976 also included Steve Davis and Lou Giammona. Richard Todd, who spelled Namath last year, will be given first chance at securing the quarterback spot now that Namath has gone to the Los Angeles Rams. Steve Joachim and ninth-round draft choice Matt Robinson also may get a crack at quarterback. Robinson played at Georgia, which used the run-oriented veer attack, so he was relegated to second string with the Bulldogs because he's more of a passer than a runner. Tight end Richard Caster and wide receiver Jerome Barkum both can catch the ball. Caster is still one of the ranking tight ends in the NFL, but double coverage last year limited his reception total to 31. Barkum missed much of the season with a pulled muscle. Wide receiver Wesley Walker of California, a second-round draft choice, is rated highly by the Jets. He averaged an NCAA record 25.7 yards per reception in his college career.

Defense: When injuries began to strike the already hurting defense at midseason last year, the Jets decided it was time to try some rookies. Linebackers Greg Buttle, Bob Martin, Larry Keller, and defensive end Lawrence Pillers got a chance to play and they turned out to be a surprising strength. In particular, Buttle showed remarkable ability. Pillers beat out 1975 starter Billy Newsome in the second game. First-year cornerback Shafer Suggs also got a chance to play and he showed great promise. The defensive line, which had 16 sacks last year, lowest in the NFL, is a potential problem. Starter Ed Galigher played out his option and was eventually traded to San Francisco, and tackle Carl Barzilauskas, a number one draft pick in 1974, hasn't duplicated his fine rookie year since. The Jets' new coach, Walt Michaels, thinks Tank Marshall, a third-round pick from Texas A&M, and sixth-round draft choice Joe Klecko of Temple can step in and help. Second-year man Larry Faulk played well as a rookie right tackle last year. Trades brought the Jets 17 choices in the 12 rounds of the draft, so a lot of new faces will show up in training camp. And Michaels says he expects eight or ten rookies to make the Jets in 1977. Fourteen players who ended the season with the Jets last year were in their first year, and six more rookies were listed on the team's 1977 pre-season roster. So the Jets figure to be about 50 percent rookies when the first game of the regular season rolls around.

Special Teams: Pat Leahy hit 11 of 16 field goal tries last year and didn't miss from 30 yards in. Duane Carrell handled punting well, rating sixth in the AFC with a 39.7 average, Lou Piccone and Giammona were adequate as the punt and kickoff return specialists.

1977: New coach Michaels is a strong individual who turned the young linebacker corps of the Jets into one of the team's strong points in 1976. With Jim Kensil and Al Ward directing the front office, the Jets have a dynamic twosome who should make a major difference for New York in 1977.

1976 SCORES	N.Y.J.	Opp.
Sept. 12 at Cleveland	17	38
Sept. 19 at Denver	3	46
Sept. 26 at Miami	0	16
Oct. 3 at San Francisco	6	17
Oct. 10 BUFFALO	17	14
Oct. 18 at New England (Monday)	7	41
Oct. 24 BALTIMORE	0	20
Oct. 31 at Buffalo	19	14
Nov. 7 MIAMI	7	27
Nov. 14 TAMPA BAY	34	0
Nov. 21 NEW ENGLAND	24	38
Nov. 28 at Baltimore	16	33
Dec. 5 WASHINGTON	16	37
Dec. 12 CINCINNATI	3	42
Won 3 Lost 11	**169**	**383**

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	**Att.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Clark Gaines	157	724	4.6	33	3
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD**	**Int.**
Joe Namath	230	114	1,090	49.4	4	16
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Clark Gaines	41	400	9.8	27	2
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**	**Pts.**
Pat Leahy	0	11-16	16-20	49
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Rich Sowells	2	46	23.0	27	0

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1.	Marvin Powell	T	USC
2.	Wesley Walker	WR	California
3.	Choice to Pittsburgh Charles (Tank) Marshall from San Francisco	DE	Texas A&M
4.	Scott Dierking	RB	Purdue
5.	Perry Griggs	WR	Troy State
	Gary Gregory from Denver	T	Baylor

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense		**Defense**	
83 Jerome Barkum	WR	76 Lawrence Pillers	LE
72 Robert Woods	LT	77 Carl Barzilauskas	LT
66 Randy Rasmussen	LG	74 Larry Faulk	RT
65 Joe Fields	C	81 Richard Neal	RE
67 Darrell Austin	RG	51 Greg Buttle	LLB
78 Garry Puetz	RT	55 John Ebersole	MLB
88 Richard Caster	TE	59 Bob Martin	RLB
82 David Knight	WR	23 Shafer Suggs	LCB
14 Richard Todd	QB	38 Ed Taylor	RCB
49 Ed Marinaro	RB	27 Phil Wise	LS
21 Clark Gaines	RB	22 Burgess Owens	RS
5 Pat Leahy	K	3 Duane Carrell	P

Oakland Raiders
AFC Western Division 13-1
Coach: John Madden

Pride and Poise in Paradise: Can Raiders Stay on Top?

Sistrunk and Hall anchored Raiders' defense.

Overview: The Oakland Raiders have been a contending team in every season since the merger of the old AFL and the NFL in 1966. Since that time, the Raiders have the best combined won-lost record in the NFL, winning nearly 80 percent of their games. The crown jewel in this incredible success story came last season, when the Raiders won 16 of 17 games, including a 32-14 rout of the Minnesota Vikings in Super Bowl XI. Overcoming injuries that would have flattened a lesser organization, the Raiders' defense shut down opponents in the second half of the season while the offense was up to its usual bag of tricks. Coach John Madden has the same cast back for a run at a second NFL championship.

Offense: The Raiders' offense is just as potent, if not more so, than in past years. Last year, Ken Stabler was the highest rated quarterback in the league, and he needs just 217 passing attempts to qualify for the list of all-time passers. And when he does qualify he'll rank high. In 1976 he completed two-thirds of his passes—the second highest average in NFL history—for 2,737 yards and 27 touchdowns, and an average of over nine yards a pass play. Mark van Eeghen emerged as one of the standout running backs in the NFL in 1976 when he ran for 1,012 yards. Hard-running Clarence Davis averaged 4.5 yards a carry, and Pete Banaszak was around as the short yardage specialist, and Carl Garrett spelled Davis. The Raiders' offensive line is one of the greatest in pro football history. Tight end Dave Casper lines up with, from left to right, Art Shell, Gene Upshaw, Dave Dalby, George Buehler, and John Vella. The line was a major reason for Oakland's devastating Super Bowl victory. In his first full season as a regular, Casper led the team with 53 catches. Ted Kwalick is an able backup. If opponents tried to take that weapon away as well, it meant giving more room to Clifford Branch or Fred Biletnikoff, two of the classiest receivers in the league. They caught 89 passes between them. Branch's 46 receptions went for an average of 24.2 yards a catch. Mike Siani is a suberb backup. This is literally an offense without a weakness or shortcoming.

Defense: When left end Tony Cline, right tackle Art Thoms, and right end Horace Jones were injured in the 1976 preseason, the Raiders appeared to be in trouble, but Madden showed his brilliance by switching to the three-four defense on a regular basis, a departure for the Raiders', who traditionally have played primarily with a four-man line. The three-man front was filled with tackle Dave Rowe, who had been with four previous clubs; left end John Matuszak, a free agent who had been with three previous clubs; and right end Otis Sistrunk, who had been a tackle in his first four seasons in pro football. It was a marvelous matchup of personnel and in the last half of the season the Raiders' defense was as good as any in the NFL. Behind that threesome were four superb linebackers—Phil Villapiano, Monte Johnson, Willie Hall, and Ted Hendricks. The alignment was so successful that Madden will stick with it in 1977. The defensive backs also had a lot to do with the success of the entire defense. Although they didn't intercept a lot of passes (just 16), the foursome of Skip Thomas, Willie Brown, George Atkinson, and Jack Tatum is one of the best around. Behind them are two talented young deep backs, Neal Colzie and Charles Phillips.

Special Teams: Many people feel Ray Guy is the finest punter in the league; he averaged 41.6 yards a kick last year and also handled kickoff duties. Colzie was fifth in the AFC in punt returns and Rick Jennings, a rookie, was fifth in kickoff returns. Errol Mann or Fred Steinfort will be the placekicker. Steinfort, last year's regular, suffered a groin muscle pull at midseason, so the Raiders obtained 10-year veteran Mann from Detroit, and Mann kicked all but one of his 27 extra points and 4 of 11 field goals.

1977: The offense is superb. The defense is only slightly less than that. Oakland is a powerhouse.

1976 SCORES	Oak.	Opp.
Sept. 12 PITTSBURGH	31	28
Sept. 20 at Kansas City (Monday)	24	21
Sept. 26 at Houston	14	13
Oct. 3 at New England	17	48
Oct. 10 at San Diego	27	17
Oct. 17 at Denver	17	10
Oct. 24 GREEN BAY	18	14
Oct. 31 DENVER	19	6
Nov. 7 at Chicago	28	27
Nov. 14 KANSAS CITY	21	10
Nov. 21 at Philadelphia	26	7
Nov. 28 TAMPA BAY	49	16
Dec. 6 CINCINNATI (Monday)	35	20
Dec. 12 SAN DIEGO	24	0
Won 13 Lost 1	**350**	**237**
Divisional Playoff		
Dec. 18 NEW ENGLAND	24	21
AFC Championship		
Dec. 26 PITTSBURGH	24	7
Super Bowl XI		
Jan. 9 Minnesota	32	14

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	Att.	Yards	Avg.	Long	TD
Mark van Eeghen	233	1,012	4.3	21	3
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD**	**Int.**
Ken Stabler	291	194	2,737	66.7	27	17
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Dave Casper	53	691	13.0	30	10
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**	**Pts.**
Clifford Branch	12	0	0	72
Interceptions	**Att.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Monte Johnson	4	40	10.0	22	0

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1.	Choice to Green Bay		
2.	Mike Davis	DB	Colorado
	from Philadelphia		
	Ted McKnight	RB	Minnesota-Duluth
3.	Choice to Houston through Buffalo		
4.	Mickey Marvin	G	Tennessee
5.	Lester Hayes	RB	Texas A&M
	from Chicago		
	Jeff Barnes	LB	California

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense		Defense	
21 Clifford Branch	WR	72 John Matuszak	LE
78 Art Shell	LT	74 Dave Rowe	MG
63 Gene Upshaw	LG	60 Otis Sistrunk	RE
50 Dave Dalby	C	41 Phil Villapiano	LLB
64 George Buehler	RG	58 Monte Johnson	MLB
75 John Vella	RT	39 Willie Hall	MLB
87 Dave Casper	TE	83 Ted Hendricks	RLB
25 Fred Biletnikoff	WR	26 Skip Thomas	LCB
12 Ken Stabler	QB	24 Willie Brown	RCB
28 Clarence Davis	RB	43 George Atkinson	LS
30 Mark van Eeghen	RB	32 Jack Tatum	RS
14 Errol Mann	K	8 Ray Guy	P

Pittsburgh Steelers
AFC Central Division 10-4
Coach: Chuck Noll

Steelers Homesick for Super Bowl, Plan Return Trip

Glen Edwards (27) intercepted six passes.

Overview: Those who weren't paying attention might think the dynasty that Pittsburgh was in the process of making in Super Bowls IX and X is over. But not likely. Only an early season slump, which dropped them to 1-4 at one point in 1976, tarnished the Steelers' image. Pittsburgh still is as mighty and imposing on paper as it was at the start of 1976 and that was seen in the final regular season games of last year. Under the pounding runs of Rocky Bleier and Franco Harris, the passing of Terry Bradshaw, and the clanging play of the Steel Curtain defense, Pittsburgh won nine games in succession and made the playoffs. In the AFC title game against Oakland Harris did not play because of injured ribs and Bleier was out with an injured toe, and the Raiders won quite easily, 24-7.

Offense: Terry Bradshaw started only eight games in 1976 because of various injuries, completing only 47.9 percent of his passes for 1,177 yards and 10 touchdowns. Mike Kruczek was Bradshaw's replacement. Harris and Bleier both rushed for more than 1,000 yards (1,128 and 1,036 respectively) and, as a team, the Steelers averaged 4.5 yards on every rush. John Fuqua and Dwight Harrison backed up Harris and Bleier. It's an offense geared to strong running backs and stronger linemen. Tackles Jon Kolb and Gordon Gravelle, guards Sam Davis and Gerry Mullins, and Jim Clack, and center Mike Webster are an awesome, earthmoving unit. Tight end Larry Brown is a 6-foot 3-inch, 230-pound brute who blocks like a tank but he'll be pushed by 6-foot 5-inch, 250-pound Benny Cunningham. Contortionist Lynn Swann made 28 receptions last year to lead the Steelers, but he was primarily a long-distance threat, averaging 18.4 yards a catch. Bleier and Harris combined to catch 47 passes.

Defense: Linebacker Andy Russell has retired after 12 seasons, but the Steelers feel they have a steady replacement in 222-pound Loren Toews, a fifth-year player from California. Knowing they needed depth at linebacker, the Steelers went out and got quick Robin Cole of New Mexico in the college draft. The number one choice will have a difficult time breaking in on a regular basis, because he's got the likes of all-pros Jack Ham, Jack Lambert, and newcomer Toews to beat out. The Steel Curtain is still intact, however. L.C. Greenwood, Joe Greene, Ernie Holmes, and Dwight White may be the best defensive line in pro football, and their average age is only 29. The Steelers made 41 quarterback sacks last year and held opponents to an average of 104 yards a game on the ground. Rookie Tom Beasley was drafted out of Virginia Tech as a backup defensive tackle, but Steve Furness and John Banaszak are already there as reserves. In the defensive backfield, cornerback Mel Blount and safety Glen Edwards each intercepted six passes last year. Their mates in the backfield are J.T. Thomas and Mike Wagner. During the nine-game winning streak of 1976 Pittsburgh recorded five shutouts and allowed just 28 total points. By season's end, all 14 opponents had combined to score only 138 points. If Toews can step in and replace Russell the defense won't miss a beat this year. It's an awesome unit.

Special Teams: Theo Bell, the backup wide receiver, led the club last year with an average of 10 yards a punt return. Jack Deloplaine is the regular kickoff returner, along with Ernest Pough. Bobby Walden's 39.2-yard punting average was not the greatest but he put 22 punts inside the opponents' 20; and 40 of his 76 punts were not returned. The placekicker, Roy Gerela, was injured part of the year but hit 14 of 26 field goals and was four of seven between the 40 and 50.

1977: The Steelers are among the most solid teams in the NFL. They obtained a bit more defensive depth in the draft (winding up with 18 players in 12 rounds) and figure to be tough to beat once again.

1976 SCORES	Pitt.	Opp.
Sept. 12 at Oakland	28	31
Sept. 19 CLEVELAND	31	14
Sept. 26 NEW ENGLAND	27	30
Oct. 4 at Minnesota (Monday)	6	17
Oct. 10 at Cleveland	16	18
Oct. 17 CINCINNATI	23	6
Oct. 24 at New York Giants	27	0
Oct. 31 SAN DIEGO	23	0
Nov. 7 at Kansas City	45	0
Nov. 14 MIAMI	14	3
Nov. 21 HOUSTON	32	16
Nov. 28 at Cincinnati	7	3
Dec. 5 TAMPA BAY	42	0
Dec. 11 at Houston (Saturday)	21	0
Won 10 Lost 4	**342**	**138**
Divisional Playoff		
Dec. 19 at Baltimore	40	14
AFC Championship		
Dec. 26 at Oakland	7	24

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	Att.	Yards	Avg.	Long	TD
Franco Harris	289	1,128	3.9	30	14
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD**	**Int.**
Terry Bradshaw	192	92	1,177	47.9	10	9
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Lynn Swann	28	516	18.4	47	3
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**	**Pts.**
Franco Harris	14	0	0	84
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Glen Edwards	6	95	15.8	55	0

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1.	Robin Cole	LB	New Mexico
2.	Sidney Thornton	RB	Northwest Louisiana
3.	Tom Beasley from New York Jets	DE	Virginia Tech
	Jim Smith	WR	Michigan
4.	Ted Peterson from Green Bay	C	Eastern Illinois
	Laverne Smith from Chicago	RB	Kansas
	Dan Audick	G	Hawaii
5.	Cliff Stoudt from Kansas City	QB	Youngstown State
	Steve Courson from Detroit	G	South Carolina
	Dennis Winston	LB	Arkansas

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense		Defense	
43 Frank Lewis	WR	68 L. C. Greenwood	LE
55 Jon Kolb	LT	75 Joe Greene	LT
57 Sam Davis	LG	63 Ernie Holmes	RT
52 Mike Webster	C	78 Dwight White	RE
72 Gerry Mullins	RG	59 Jack Ham	LLB
71 Gordon Gravelle	RT	58 Jack Lambert	MLB
87 Larry Brown	TE	51 Loren Toews	RLB
88 Lynn Swann	WR	24 J. T. Thomas	LCB
12 Terry Bradshaw	QB	47 Mel Blount	RCB
20 Rocky Bleier	RB	23 Mike Wagner	LS
32 Franco Harris	RB	27 Glen Edwards	RS
10 Roy Gerela	K	39 Bobby Walden	P

San Diego Chargers
AFC Western Division 6-8
Coach: Tommy Prothro

Chargers Hope Air Routes Clear for Takeoff in '77

Tight end Pat Curran caught 33 passes.

Overview: Since 1970, the San Diego Chargers have had the toughest schedule in the NFL based on records of the previous season. And things haven't changed much this year. The team must play opponents with a combined 1976 won-lost record of 112-84, a .571 winning percentage. Only Kansas City faces a tougher schedule. No team in the NFL surprised more people in the early stages of 1976 than the Chargers. The Chargers left the starting gate 3-0, but the fourth week of the season they lost to a fired-up Denver team and things began to slide. Still, the team's 6-8 record (after 2-12 the year before) was its best since 1971.

Offense: A knee injury kept 1974's AFC rookie of the year Don Woods out most of 1975 and when he came back last season he found that another youngster, Rickey Young, had supplanted him and was clinging tenaciously to the job as the team's leading ball carrier. Young led the Chargers with 577 yards gained in Woods' absence in 1975 and gained 802 yards last year, averaging five yards a carry. Woods, slowed by an ankle injury in the fifth game, added 450. Also back healthy this year is Joe Washington, a number one draft choice a year ago out of Oklahoma. Bo Matthews and Sam Scarber also are in reserve. But the Chargers' biggest improvement over 1975 came in the passing of quarterback Dan Fouts. The former Oregon star completed only two touchdown passes in 1975, but threw 14 last year, hitting 58 percent of his passes for 2,535 yards. Clint Longley, the former Cowboy, is Fouts's reserve. Veteran receiver Charlie Joiner, obtained from Cincinnati in trade for defensive lineman Coy Bacon, was Fouts's main target, 50 times for 1,056 yards and seven touchdowns. Young caught 47 passes and Woods 34. Joiner was the long-distance man, going an average of more than 21 yards per catch. Tight end Pat Curran added 33 catches to provide an additional threat. And three other threats are around to make Fouts's job even more pleasant: Gary Garrison, who missed much of 1976 with a shoulder injury; Johnny Rodgers, a number one draft choice in 1973 who has played in Canada since then; and Chip Myers, who was obtained from Cincinnati last spring. Dwight McDonald, a free agent rookie last year, is also a possibility. The offensive line has some solid talent in guard Doug Wilkerson and all-pro tackle Russ Washington. Ed Flanagan and Ralph Perretta were the centers in 1976, but the Chargers used their number one draft pick this year on Bob Rush, a 250-pound center from Memphis State. Guard Booker Brown also returns.

Defense: The Chargers permitted 334 yards a game last year and almost 190 of them came through the air. The returning lineup in the secondary has Danny Colbert, Mike Williams, and Tom Hayes at the corners and Mike Fuller, Chris Fletcher, and Hal Stringert at the safeties. Fuller was the only one to start every game last year. Colbert and Hayes were the starters at cornerback when 1976 started, but Williams wound up starting 10 games, split almost evenly between the positions. To help stabilize things, the Chargers made Colorado State defensive back Keith King their second draft choice. The linebackers—Don Goode, Tom Graham, and Woodrow Lowe, along with reserves Bob Horn and Ray Preston—form a strong contingent. The weakness in the defense was not apparent in the defensive line. Right end Leroy Jones, who weighed 238 pounds stretched out on 6-feet 8-inches a year ago, is up to 265 pounds now; he is a fierce pass rusher. Fred Dean, Louis Kelcher, and Gary Johnson are the others on the line. All of them are strong and quick; Kelcher and Johnson each weigh over 270 pounds.

Special Teams: The Chargers had punting troubles until they signed free agent Jeff West, who finished with a 40.7 average. The Chargers also drafted Cliff Olander of New Mexico State. Toni Fritsch and Ray Wersching split the placekicking adequately. Fuller's 13.2 punt return figure was excellent.

1977: If Fouts and his receivers make a few more connections and the pass defense is upgraded, the Chargers' rise could continue.

1976 SCORES	S.D.	Opp.
Sept. 12 at Kansas City	30	16
Sept. 19 at Tampa Bay	23	0
Sept. 26 ST. LOUIS	43	24
Oct. 3 at Denver	0	26
Oct. 10 OAKLAND	17	27
Oct. 17 HOUSTON	30	27
Oct. 24 at Cleveland	17	21
Oct. 31 at Pittsburgh	0	23
Nov. 7 BALTIMORE	21	37
Nov. 14 DENVER	0	17
Nov. 21 at Buffalo	34	13
Nov. 28 at KANSAS CITY	20	23
Dec. 5 SAN FRANCISCO	13	7
Dec. 12 at Oakland	0	24
Won 6 Lost 8	**248**	**285**

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	**Att.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Rickey Young	162	802	5.0	46t	4
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD** **Int.**
Dan Fouts	359	208	2,355	57.9	14 15
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Charlie Joiner	50	1,056	21.1	81t	7
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**		**Pts.**
Charlie Joiner	7	0	0		42
Interceptions	**Att.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Don Goode	6	82	13.7	27	0

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1.	Choice to Seattle through Dallas		
	Bob Rush	C	Memphis State
	from Dallas		
2.	Choice to Seattle through Dallas		
3.	Choice to Los Angeles		
	Keith King	DB	Colorado State
	from Washington		
4.	Choice to Houston through Miami		
5.	Clarence Williams	RB	South Carolina
	Cliff Olander	QB	New Mexico State
	from Cleveland		

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense		**Defense**	
89 Dwight McDonald	WR	71 Fred Dean	LE
66 Billy Shields	LT	74 Louie Kelcher	LT
63 Doug Wilkerson	LG	79 Gary Johnson	RT
53 Ralph Perretta	C	68 Leroy Jones	RE
62 Don Macek	RG	50 Don Goode	LLB
70 Russ Washington	RT	58 Tom Graham	MLB
82 Pat Curran	TE	51 Woodrow Lowe	RLB
18 Charlie Joiner	WR	46 Danny Colbert	LCB
14 Dan Fouts	QB	20 Mike Williams	RCB
34 Rickey Young	RB	42 Mike Fuller	LS
33 Don Woods	RB	45 Hal Stringert	RS
6 Ray Wersching	K	80 Jeff West	P

Seattle Seahawks
AFC Western Division 2-12
Coach: Jack Patera

Seahawks Preparing a Slew of Surprises for AFC

Running back Smith was drafted as a receiver.

Overview: Expansion teams aren't supposed to overwhelm anyone, but the Seattle Seahawks threw some scares into a few teams in 1976. The final 2-12 record included close losses to Green Bay at Milwaukee (27-20) and St. Louis (30-24), a heartbreaking 27-21 defeat at Minnesota (after the Seahawks led 21-20 in the fourth period), and victories over Atlanta and Tampa Bay. The offense played surprisingly well; quarterback Jim Zorn and wide receiver Steve Largent were particular finds.

Offense: Zorn attended Cal Poly Pomona, a school more noted for its veterinarians than its pro quarterbacks. But Zorn passed for 2,571 yards and 12 touchdowns last year. Bill Munson is the backup. Zorn's number one target was Largent, whom Houston had drafted in the fourth round and then traded to Seattle for a draft choice. Largent caught 54 passes for 705 yards, a 13-yard average. Swift Sherman Smith gave the Seahawks a running threat with 537 yards. Forced to scramble frequently, Zorn rushed for 246 yards, the same total achieved by fullback Don Testerman. One wide receiver spot was made uncertain in the offseason when Sam McCullum suffered a knee injury in a pickup basketball game. It required surgery, and Steve Raible, who averaged 31.6 yards on four catches last year, started training camp as the wide receiver opposite Largent. The Seahawks' line, from left to right, includes Nick Bebout, Bob Penchion, Fred Hoaglin, Bob Newton, and Norm Evans. Two top draft choices who will challenge for a starting job are guard Steve August of Tulsa and guard Tom Lynch of Boston College, who came to Seattle after the Seahawks gave up the number two pick in the entire draft for a first and three second-round picks. Wide receiver Larry Seivers of Tennessee was a fourth-round selection. Eight of the 12 draft picks were offensive players; an obvious move to strengthen this area.

Defense: Coach Jack Patera went into the allocation draft before the Seahawks had any players saying he would build his team around defense. Strangely, things worked out the other way and he had a much better offense. The Seahawks' defense surrendered 429 points, most in the league. The top name defenders on this Seattle team are Mike Curtis, one of the NFL's premier linebackers over the last decade, third-year safety Dave Brown, safety Steve Preece, cornerback Eddie McMillan, massive left tackle Steve Niehaus of Notre Dame, and linebacker Ken Geddes. It's a nucleus on which to build. Dave Tipton plays outside Niehaus on the left side and the other linemen last year were veterans Richard Harris and Bob Lurtsema. The Seahawks had trouble against the run, permitting 206 yards per game to opponents' ball carriers last year, and they tried various combinations on the line. First, Harris started the season at right end. Then, in the second week, he moved to left end, followed that by switching to right tackle at mid-year, and he wound up starting the last six games there. Left cornerback McMillan, free safety Brown, strong safety Al Matthews, and linebackers Curtis and Ed Bradley started every game last year, and that stability resulted in better pass defense—only 180 yards per game. Two second-round choices were linebackers—Terry Beeson of Kansas and Pete Cronan of Boston College. Seattle has high hopes in 6-foot 6-inch, 245-pound Dennis Boyd of Oregon State, a candidate for one defensive end spot and counts on former 49er Bill Sandifer to help. Sandifer came in a trade for Ed Bradley.

Special Teams: Punter Rick Engles averaged 38.3 yards per punt last year. The placekicker, John Leypoldt, didn't get a chance to try many, only 12, but he made 8. Brown and Lyle Blackwood returned punts last year, but neither showed any breakaway ability. Blackwood also averaged 23.8 yards a kickoff return.

1977: The Seahawks played tough, exciting football in 1976, yet the defense broke down too often. If Patera can improve this area, Seattle could surprise some teams in 1977.

1976 SCORES	Sea.	Opp.
Sept. 12 ST. LOUIS	24	30
Sept. 19 at Washington	7	31
Sept. 26 SAN FRANCISCO	21	37
Oct. 3 DALLAS	13	28
Oct. 10 vs. Green Bay (Milwaukee)	20	27
Oct. 17 at Tampa Bay	13	10
Oct. 24 DETROIT	14	41
Oct. 31 at Los Angeles	6	45
Nov. 7 ATLANTA	30	13
Nov. 14 at Minnesota	21	27
Nov. 21 NEW ORLEANS	27	51
Nov. 28 at New York Giants	16	28
Dec. 5 CHICAGO	7	34
Dec. 12 at Philadelphia	10	27
Won 2 Lost 12	**229**	**429**

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	Att.	Yards	Avg.	Long	TD
Sherman Smith	119	537	4.5	53	4
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD**	**Int.**
Jim Zorn	439	208	2,571	47.3	12	27
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Steve Largent	54	705	13.0	45	4
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**	**Pts.**
John Leypoldt	0	8-12	19-22	43
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Dave Brown	4	70	17.5	33	0

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1. Choice to Dallas
   Steve August — G — Tulsa
   from San Diego through Dallas
2. Choice to Los Angeles
   Tom Lynch — T — Boston College
   from Buffalo through Dallas
   Terry Beeson — LB — Kansas
   from San Diego through Dallas
   Pete Cronan — LB — Boston College
   from Los Angeles
3. Dennis Boyd — DE — Oregon State
4. John Yarno — C — Idaho
   Larry Seivers — WR — Tennessee
   from Minnesota
5. Choice to Detroit

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense		Defense	
83 Steve Raible	WR	75 Dave Tipton	LE
63 Nick Debout	LT	71 Steve Niehaus	LT
67 Bob Penchion	LG	77 Richard Harris	RE
53 Fred Hoaglin	C	70 Bob Lurtsema	RE
78 Bob Newton	RG	56 Sammy Green	LLB
73 Norm Evans	RT	38 Ed Bradley	MLB
87 Ron Howard	TE	32 Mike Curtis	RLB
80 Steve Largent	WR	41 Eddie McMillan	LCB
10 Jim Zorn	QB	45 Rolly Woolsey	RCB
47 Sherman Smith	RB	29 Al Matthews	LS
42 Don Testerman	RB	22 Dave Brown	RS
3 John Leypoldt	K	5 Rick Engles	P

NFC Preview

Thirteen rivals take aim at the Vikings

Atlanta Falcons
NFC Western Division 4-10
Coach: Leeman Bennett

Bennett Will Try to Solve the Falcons' Puzzle

Bubba Bean, one of many Falcons' runners.

Overview: Winston Churchill once described the Soviet Union as "a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma." That's not a bad way to describe the Atlanta Falcons of 1976. On one hand, they beat Dallas, Chicago, and San Francisco. On the other, they were the only non-expansion team to lose to Seattle. And they also suffered a 59-0 embarrassment in Los Angeles. New head coach Leeman Bennett, who helped the Rams fashion that defeat, will seek to bring consistency to the Falcons this year.

Offense: Bennett's biggest asset is the running back corps. It has three second-year people who performed well as rookies—Sonny Collins, Bubba Bean, and Mike Esposito. Bean was the Falcons' leading ball carrier last year with 428 yards and a 3.5-yard average, but he's listed as the backup to Collins, the former Kentucky workhorse who averaged more than 30 carries a game as a collegian. Esposito starts at the other running back position after averaging 5.3 yards last year. Haskell Stanback divided time with Esposito last season and will again this year. In addition, the Falcons chose a player of great potential on the eleventh round of the 1977 draft in USC's Dave Farmer, an injury-prone fullback who blocked well for Ricky Bell and never lost a yard as a Trojan. Steve Bartkowski's injury last year fortunately was to his knee, not his passing arm, and he should be back healthy. However, his offensive line is uncertain. Jeff Van Note was a Pro Bowl center before he suffered a knee injury requiring surgery. Paul Ryczek started the final four games of the season. At guard, Gregg Kindle started 11 games and Larron Jackson started all 14, with Royce Smith subbing for Kindle and Walter Brett also showing potential. "Our guard positions are very much undecided," said Bennett before training camp opened. The Atlanta defense permitted 184 yards per game on the ground last season. In 1976, Atlanta's tackles were Brent Adams and Len Gotshalk, but the Falcons drafted Warren Bryant of Kentucky on the first round of the 1977 draft. The 6-foot 6-inch, 250-pounder is expected to challenge for a starting spot, as will tackle K.C. Thielmann, a third-round selection from Arkansas. At wide receiver, John Gilliam had a sub-par year in 1976 with only 21 catches. The leader was Alfred Jenkins with 41. Tight end Jim Mitchell was used primarily as a blocker last year and ended up with only 17 catches after receiving 34 in 1975.

Defense: Atlanta's opponents rushed for 2,579 yards in 1976, averaging 4.5 yards every time they ran. Only three teams had a poorer record. Some personnel changes seem inevitable. The defensive ends, however, appear stable. Claude Humphrey came back from knee surgery last year to play well and his opposite number, Jeff Merrow, is called "a street fighter" by Bennett. Mike Tilleman, Mike Lewis, and Jim Bailey are among the returning tackles but they'll be challenged by 6-foot 5-inch, 275-pound Wilson Faumuina, a number one draft selection from San Jose State, where he was all-coast for two consecutive years. Other tackle help may come from third-round choice Edgar Fields of Texas A&M. For the first time since the Falcons started operating in 1966, Tommy Nobis will not be around, and the retirement of the very first player ever drafted by the Falcons leaves a hole at linebacker. Ralph Ortega is the leading candidate to assume the middle linebacking spot. Fulton Kuykendall, who is coming back from a back injury last year, is the right linebacker. Greg Brezina is the linebacker on the other side. Atlanta's defensive backs—Rolland Lawrence, Frank Reed, Ray Brown, and Ray Easterling—are a strength.

Special Teams: John James was the most efficient punter in the NFL last year. He averaged 42.1 yards on a league high of 101 punts, and his net average (punt, minus return) was 36.2, the best in the NFL. Nick Mike-Mayer was inconsistent as a placekicker. Lawrence was a good punt and kickoff returner.

1977: This is not a team without problems but it is not a team without talent, either. The return of Bartkowski will help a lot. And the strong, quiet leadership of Bennett could help even more.

1976 SCORES	Atl.	Opp.
Sept. 12 at LOS ANGELES	14	30
Sept. 19 at Detroit	10	24
Sept. 26 at Chicago	10	0
Oct. 3 PHILADELPHIA	13	14
Oct. 10 at New Orleans	0	30
Oct. 17 CLEVELAND	17	20
Oct. 23 at San Francisco (Saturday)	0	15
Oct. 31 NEW ORLEANS	23	20
Nov. 7 at Seattle	13	30
Nov. 14 SAN FRANCISCO	21	16
Nov. 21 DALLAS	17	10
Nov. 28 at Houston	14	20
Dec. 4 at Los Angeles (Saturday)	0	59
Dec. 12 GREEN BAY	20	24
Won 4 Lost 10	**172**	**312**

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	Att.	Yards	Avg.	Long	TD
Bubba Bean	124	428	3.5	30	2
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD**	**Int.**
Scott Hunter	110	51	46.4	633	5	4
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Alfred Jenkins	41	710	17.3	34t	6
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**	**Pts.**
Nick Mike-Mayer	0	10-21	20-20	50
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Rolland Lawrence	6	43	7.2	22	0

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1.	Warren Bryant	T	Kentucky
	Wilson Faumuina from St. Louis	DT	San Jose State
2.	K. C. Thielmann	G	Arkansas
3.	Edgar Fields	DT	Texas A&M
4.	Allan Leavitt	K	Georgia
5.	Shelton Diggs	WR	USC

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense			Defense	
42	John Gilliam	WR	87 Claude Humphrey	LE
61	Brent Adams	LT	74 Mike Tilleman	LT
68	Larron Jackson	LG	69 Mike Lewis	RT
57	Jeff Van Note	C	75 Jeff Merrow	RE
63	Gregg Kindle	RG	50 Greg Brezina	LLB
65	Len Gotshalk	RT	55 Ralph Ortega	MLB
86	Jim Mitchell	TE	54 Fulton Kuykendall	RLB
84	Alfred Jenkins	WR	22 Rolland Lawrence	LCB
10	Steve Bartkowski	QB	28 Frank Reed	RCB
26	Mike Esposito	RB	34 Ray Brown	LS
41	Sonny Collins	RB	32 Ray Easterling	RS
12	Nick Mike-Mayer	K	6 John James	P

Chicago Bears
NFC Central Division 7-7
Coach: Jack Pardee

Bears of '77 Are Worth More Than a Passing Glance

Greg Latta, a 235-pound tight end.

Overview: No question, the Bears are one of the NFL's emerging teams. They finished with a 7-7 record in 1976 but three of the defeats were by a total of six points, including one-point losses to the two teams that played in Super Bowl XI, Oakland and Minnesota. In a rematch with the Vikings later in the season, Chicago turned it around and won 14-13. The Bears upgraded their offense during the off-season by adding Sid Gillman as offensive coordinator and obtaining quarterback Mike Phipps from Cleveland.

Offense: In only two seasons, Walter Payton has become one of the preminent running backs in the NFL. Slowed by injuries as a rookie in 1975, he rebounded last year to run for 1,390 yards, best in the NFC and second only to Buffalo's O.J. Simpson in the entire league. In fact, Payton led most of the season until O.J. came on strong at the end. Payton's 13 touchdowns were one short of the co-leaders, Chuck Foreman and Franco Harris. Payton averaged 4.5 yards per carry and he caught 15 passes—a figure that should go up under Gillman, who figures to open up the club's offense. The Chicago quarterback likely will be Mike Phipps, the former Purdue passer who came to the Bears for two draft choices, one of them a first-round pick in 1978. It marked the first time the Bears have traded away a first-round selection. Bob Avellini, who completed just 43.5 percent of his passes last year, will push Phipps, however. Avellini has talent and is a good leader, but at 23 he has yet to prove himself as a passer. Virgil Carter also is around. Good protection is assured from a line of Lionel Antoine, Noah Jackson, Dan Neal, Jeff Sevy, and Dennis Lick. Greg Latta is an emerging tight end; he caught 18 passes last year for a 14-yard average. Ted Albrecht, the number one pick from California in the player draft, will help at either tackle or guard. Roland Harper, Payton's sidekick, added 625 yards and provided some excellent blocking. Others who can carry the ball and clear paths are Mike Adamle, Johnny Musso, and rookie Robin Earl, a 250-pound behemoth from Washington. The Bears also picked up Tommy Reamon for a draft choice. Rookie James Scott caught 26 passes last year when knee injuries took Bo Rather and Ron Shanklin out early in the season, and with all three back, plus rookie Brian Baschnagel, the Bears are hopeful.

Defense: The Bears feel blessed with what they consider one of the top defensive lines around in Mike Hartenstine, Jim Osborne, Wally Chambers, and Roger Stillwell, with Royce Berry in reserve. They average only 3.1 years of NFL experience but they combined for most of the Bears' 49 quarterback sacks in 1976. In fact, Chicago had 23 sacks after just four games. Osborne alone had 15 sacks. Chambers is a genuine superstar at tackle. The linebacking talent runs deep. Middle linebacker Don Rives averaged nearly 12 tackles a game. Waymond Bryant and Ross Brupbacher both showed flashes of brilliance at linebacker. Pardee also has second-year pro Tom Hicks, who played exceptionally well in spots last year. And also back is defensive back Doug Buffone, who missed all of 1976 with an injury. When 1976 started, the Bears' secondary was supposed to be a weak area; when the season ended, it turned out to be a strength. Cornerbacks Allan Ellis and Virgil Livers didn't permit a touchdown pass for the first eight weeks of the season, and safeties Craig Clemons and Doug Plank were second and third in individual tackles. Mike Spivey of Colorado was drafted on the second round to add depth and stability to the backfield. However, Ellis, Livers, Plank, and Clemons started every game last year, and the Bears feel that may be the strongest aspect of the defense. Terry Schmidt is the reserve cornerback, Bill Knox is the backup at safety, so Spivey will have a hard time starting.

Special Teams: Tight end Bob Parsons punted for a 37.6-yard average last year. Bob Thomas's field goal percentage was just under 50, with 12 of 25, but he missed just two less than 40 yards. Livers was an adequate punt returner. Brian Baschnagel returned kickoffs an average of 26 yards.

1977: If Payton stays free of injuries and gets some passing assistance, the Bears will be a serious challenge to Minnesota in the NFC Central.

1976 SCORES	Chi.	Opp.
Sept. 12 DETROIT	10	3
Sept. 19 at San Francisco	19	12
Sept. 26 ATLANTA	0	10
Oct. 3 WASHINGTON	33	7
Oct. 10 at Minnesota	19	20
Oct. 17 at Los Angeles	12	20
Oct. 24 at Dallas	21	31
Oct. 31 MINNESOTA	14	13
Nov. 7 OAKLAND	27	28
Nov. 14 GREEN BAY	24	13
Nov. 21 at Detroit	10	14
Nov. 28 at Green Bay	16	10
Dec. 5 at Seattle	34	7
Dec. 12 DENVER	14	28
Won 7 Lost 7	**253**	**216**

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	Att.	Yards	Avg.	Long	TD
Walter Payton	311	1,390	4.5	60	13
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD** **Int.**
Bob Avellini	271	118	1,580	43.5	8 15
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Roland Harper	29	291	10.0	39	1
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**		**Pts.**
Walter Payton	13	0	0		78
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Ross Brupbacher	7	49	7.0	25	0

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1.	Ted Albrecht	T	California
2.	Mike Spivey	DB	Colorado
3.	Robin Earl	RB	Washington
	from New York Giants		
	Choice to Miami		
4.	Choice to Pittsburgh		
5.	Choice to Oakland		

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense			Defense	
47	Brian Baschnagel	WR	73 Mike Hartenstine	LE
79	Lionel Antoine	LT	68 Jim Osborne	LT
65	Noah Jackson	LG	60 Wally Chambers	RT
52	Dan Neal	C	71 Roger Stillwell	RE
75	Jeff Sevy	RG	59 Ross Brupbacher	LLB
70	Dennis Lick	RT	57 Don Rives	MLB
88	Greg Latta	TE	50 Waymond Bryant	RLB
89	James Scott	WR	48 Allan Ellis	LCB
7	Bob Avellini	QB	24 Virgil Livers	RCB
35	Roland Harper	RB	46 Doug Plank	LS
34	Walter Payton	RB	43 Craig Clemons	RS
16	Bob Thomas	K	86 Bob Parsons	P

Dallas Cowboys
NFC Eastern Division 11-3
Coach: Tom Landry

Tony D Should Be What "Big D" Has Been Missing

Ed Jones's nickname is "Too Tall" for a reason.

Overview: A lot of people figured the Cowboys had one major weakness last season. They lacked a breakaway running back. That deficiency was corrected on the morning of the first day of the NFL's college draft last spring, when Dallas traded four later draft choices to Seattle to obtain the Seahawks' number two position in the draft. The Cowboys used the spot to take Pittsburgh's Tony Dorsett. Still, there wasn't much wrong with this team in 1976. It had an 11-3 record, won another NFC East championship, and was barely squeezed out by Los Angeles 14-12 in the first round of the playoffs. The 1976 Cowboys also had more than their share of injuries.

Offense: When Preston Pearson was hurt in training camp (knee), Doug Dennison took over and became the leading ball carrier with 542 yards. He averaged 3.5 yards, and his running mate, Robert Newhouse, averaged 3.9. Scott Laidlaw, the third running back, averaged a respectable 4.5, but he is a power runner, not a speedster. Enter Dorsett. The 194-pound Heisman trophy winner figures to supply that need. Quarterback Roger Staubach is back after a busy 1976 in which he threw 369 times and completed 208 (both club records) for 2,715 yards and 14 touchdowns. Staubach played the second half of the season with a broken finger but he's healthy now. Drew Pearson had 58 receptions to lead the NFC and rank fourth in the NFL; he averaged nearly 14 yards per catch and complemented the play of Billy Joe DuPree at tight end. Dupree caught a career high 42 passes, averaging 16.2. Golden Richards, who was slowed by injuries, grabbed 19 passes. Butch Johnson, who caught only five passes last year, showed flashes of brilliance, which makes him a threat to start ahead of Richards. Tony Hill, a third-round pick from Stanford who broke a number of Gene Washington's school records, also could contribute at wide receiver. The Cowboys' offense operates behind a seasoned line of Ralph Neely, Herb Scott, John Fitzerald, Blaine Nye, and Rayfield Wright. Wright is one of the finest offensive linemen in the game. Neely, Fitzgerald, Nye, and Wright started every game last year. Second-year man Burton Lawless was the opening-game starter at left guard. He was the youngster, who as a rookie out of Florida the year before had started for a time, a rarity for a rookie to make that leap in Dallas. However, Scott, also in his second year, wound up starting 10 games at the position, making Lawless a sensational reserve.

Defense: Despite a host of injuries, Dallas played excellent defense, limiting opponents to 194 points and an average of 136 yards passing and 130 yards rushing. The front line of Ed Jones, Jethro Pugh, Larry Cole, and Harvey Martin played with ferocity. Martin, in particular, showed the rest of the league what Landry has been saying for some time—that Harvey is one of the NFL's very best. When middle linebacker Lee Roy Jordan retired, Landry deliberated long and hard before deciding to fill the spot with Bob Breunig. Randy White, the 1974 Outland Trophy winner at Maryland, will move into Breunig's spot at left linebacker. D. D. Lewis mans the other side. Cornerbacks Mel Renfro and Mark Washington both underwent surgery in the offseason (knees), but the defense was stabilized by Benny Barnes at one corner and safeties Charlie Waters and Cliff Harris, both Pro Bowl performers. Barnes and Waters started every game last year. Harris, however, was injured for most of the preseason, and Randy Hughes started the first two games until Harris could regain his feet. Aaron Kyle is a quality reserve.

Special Teams: Johnson handled every punt last year, averaging 10.9 yards a return. He also averaged 24.8 on kickoffs. Efren Herrera came back from a 1975 knee injury to hit all 34 of his extra points and 18 of 23 field goals. Danny White's 38.4 punting average was adequate, considering he was injured.

1977: With Dorsett, Dallas will have greater backfield speed, and that's about all they lacked a year ago. The Cowboys will very definitely have Super Bowl visions dancing in their heads.

1976 SCORES	Dall.	Opp.
Sept. 12 PHILADELPHIA	27	7
Sept. 19 at New Orleans	24	6
Sept. 26 BALTIMORE	30	27
Oct. 3 at Seattle	28	13
Oct. 10 at New York Giants	24	14
Oct. 17 at St. Louis	17	21
Oct. 24 CHICAGO	31	21
Oct. 31 at Washington	20	7
Nov. 7 NEW YORK GIANTS	9	3
Nov. 15 BUFFALO (Monday)	17	10
Nov. 21 at Atlanta	10	17
Nov. 25 ST. LOUIS (Thanksgiving)	19	14
Dec. 5 at Philadelphia	26	7
Dec. 12 WASHINGTON	14	27
Won 11 Lost 3	**296**	**194**

Divisional Playoff		
Dec. 19 LOS ANGELES	12	14

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	Att.	Yards	Avg.	Long	TD
Doug Dennison	153	542	3.5	14	6
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD**	**Int.**
Roger Staubach	369	208	2,715	56.4	14	11
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Drew Pearson	58	806	13.9	40	6
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**	**Pts.**
Efren Herrera	0	18-23	34-34	88
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Mark Washington	4	49	12.3	22	0

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1.	Tony Dorsett from Seattle Choice to San Diego	RB	Pittsburgh
2.	Glenn Carano	QB	Nevada-Las Vegas
3.	Tony Hill from Philadelphia	WR	Stanford
	Val Belcher	G	Houston
4.	Guy Brown	LB	Houston
5.	Andy Frederick	DT	New Mexico

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense			Defense		
83	Golden Richards	WR	72	Ed Jones	LE
73	Ralph Neely	LT	75	Jethro Pugh	LT
68	Herbert Scott	LG	63	Larry Cole	RT
62	John Fitzgerald	C	79	Harvey Martin	RE
61	Blaine Nye	RG	54	Randy White	LLB
70	Rayfield Wright	RT	53	Bob Breunig	MLB
89	Billy Joe DuPree	TE	50	D. D. Lewis	RLB
88	Drew Pearson	WR	31	Benny Barnes	LCB
12	Roger Staubach	QB	20	Mel Renfro	RCB
26	Preston Pearson	RB	41	Charlie Waters	LS
44	Robert Newhouse	RB	43	Cliff Harris	RS
1	Efren Herrera	K	11	Danny White	P

Detroit Lions
NFC Central Division 6-8
Coach: Tommy Hudspeth

Lions Licking the Wounds of '76, Set for Resurgence

Tight end Sanders was number two receiver.

Overview: Despite injuries to a number of players, including three defensive tackles, Detroit posted the third best defensive record in the NFL in 1976. And Greg Landry had a healthy season, guiding the most productive offense Detroit had fielded since 1972. But injuries, missed opportunities, and bad luck led to a number of close defeats to good teams: 10-3 to Chicago, 10-9 and 31-23 to Minnesota, and 20-17 to Los Angeles. Coach Tommy Hudspeth, who took over from Rick Forzano after the team began the 1976 season with a 1-3 record, hopes to reverse the misfortune this year.

Offense: Landry had the best season of his 10-year career, completing 58 percent of his passes, 17 for touchdowns. However, wide receiver J. D. Hill, obtained from Buffalo for a first draft choice, went out with an injury in the first game. Ray Jarvis stepped in and handled the job well. Then the other wide receiver, Larry Walton, also suffered an injury and gave way to David Hill. The right side of the offensive line stayed healthy and four veterans—tight end Charlie Sanders (9 years), tackle Rocky Freitas (9), guard Bob Kowalkowski (11), and center Jon Morris (13)—blocked well for running backs Dexter Bussey and 240-pound Lawrence Gaines. Lynn Boden, Russ Bolinger, Craig Hertwig, and Jim Yarborough also had creditable blocking performances during the year. The Lions ran the ball well, and they may get some help this season with the unexpected return of former Oklahoma Heisman trophy winner Steve Owens. He'll vie for a backfield spot after sitting out two years following knee surgery in 1974. Owens, the only Lion ever to rush for more than 1,000 yards in a season, will attempt a remarkable comeback. Also around will be 205-pound Rick Kane of San Jose State, a third-round pick. Landry's 1976 passing statistics—57.7 percent completion rate, 2,191 yards—are all the more remarkable, considering his lack of protection. Lions' quarterbacks were sacked 67 times last year, by far the highest figure in the NFL. Looking toward the future, the Lions drafted 6-foot 4-inch quarterback Steve Mathieson of Florida State. Veteran Joe Reed also is around to back up Landry. Offensively, the Lions in 1976 had their best year since 1972. Their rushing average of 4.3 yards per carry was the best in the NFC; they produced the second highest total of first downs in Detroit history (259); and with 20 of their 32 touchdowns coming through the air, it was the Lions' most successful air attack in 14 years, in spite of the quarterback sacks. The addition of Kane and Mathieson solidifies the offense.

Defense: Linebacker Charlie Weaver, the Lions' most valuable defensive player last year, led a defense that gave up only 25 touchdowns despite various physical problems. Tackle Herb Orvis was lost to injury in the second week last year, and his replacement, Doug English, went out at midseason. Then Larry Hand was cut down, forcing right end Jim Mitchell to move to tackle and putting rookie John Woodcock in at the other tackle. Ed O'Neil alternated at the left and middle linebacker positions with Paul Naumoff and Jim Laslavic. Ron Crosby, another in a long string of Penn State linebackers, is a draft selection who will see some action. The secondary spots remained basically the same throughout the season. The experienced foursome of Lem Barney, Charlie West, Dick Jauron, and Levi Johnson helped the team record 24 interceptions, and the team leader was James Hunter, who replaced Jauron in midseason when he was injured. Hunter had seven interceptions. The Lions also chose defensive back Walt Williams of New Mexico State in the second round of the draft, their first picks.

Special Teams: The elusive Hunter, a rookie from Grambling last year, was one of the happy surprises for the Lions. Not only did he play well on defense, but he handled kickoff returns, averaging 26.8 yards a return. Herman Weaver's punting average was 39.5, and only 39 of 84 were returned. Benny Ricardo hit 10 of 14 field goals in half a season after Errol Mann, the nine year veteran, was released.

1977: The Lions may have been the strongest team in the NFL last year with a losing record (6-8), and if they can avoid injuries they should come back strongly.

1976 SCORES	Det.	Opp.
Sept. 12 at Chicago	3	10
Sept. 19 ATLANTA	24	10
Sept. 26 MINNESOTA	9	10
Oct. 3 at Green Bay	14	24
Oct. 10 NEW ENGLAND	30	10
Oct. 17 at Washington	7	20
Oct. 24 at Seattle	41	14
Oct. 31 GREEN BAY	27	6
Nov. 7 at Minnesota	23	31
Nov. 14 at New Orleans	16	17
Nov. 21 CHICAGO	14	10
Nov. 25 BUFFALO (Thanksgiving)	27	14
Dec. 5 at New York Giants	10	24
Dec. 11 LOS ANGELES (Saturday)	17	20
Won 6 Lost 8	**262**	**220**

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	Att.	Yards	Avg.	Long	TD
Dexter Bussey	196	858	4.4	46	3
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD**	**Int.**
Greg Landry	291	168	2,191	57.7	17	8
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Ray Jarvis	39	822	21.1	74t	5
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**	**Pts.**
Benny Ricardo	0	10-14	19-21	49
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
James Hunter	7	120	17.1	39t	1

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1. Choice to Buffalo		
2. Walt Williams	DB	New Mexico State
3. Rick Kane	RB	San Jose State
4. Luther Blue	WR	Iowa State
5. Ron Crosby from Seattle Choice to Pittsburgh	LB	Penn State

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense			Defense	
45 Ray Jarvis	WR	82 Ken Sanders	LE
71 Craig Hertwig	LT	80 Herb Orvis	LT
73 Russ Bolinger	LG	77 John Woodcock	RT
63 Jon Morris	C	83 Jim Mitchell	RE
66 Bob Kowalkowski	RG	50 Paul Naumoff	LLB
76 Rockne Freitas	RT	52 Jim Laslavic	MLB
88 Charlie Sanders	TE	59 Charlie Weaver	RLB
49 Larry Walton	WR	20 Lem Barney	LCB
11 Greg Landry	QB	23 Levi Johnson	RCB
24 Dexter Bussey	RB	40 Charlie West	LS
38 Lawrence Gaines	RB	28 James Hunter	RS
1 Benny Ricardo	K	18 Herman Weaver	P

Green Bay Packers
NFC Central Division 5-9
Coach: Bart Starr

Packers' Time Bomb Could Explode Soon in NFC Central

Barty Smith (33) led Packers in touchdowns.

Overview: The Pack may not be back yet . . . but it's not far away. Bart Starr's team won only five games in 1976 but it lost to Super Bowl champion Oakland by just four points and it was in all four games it played against its two crucial NFC Central opponents, Minnesota and Chicago (losing to the Vikings by 7 and 11 points, to the Bears by 6 and 11).

Offense: Lynn Dickey assumed the mantle of leader in 1976 before he suffered a shoulder separation in the tenth game. He passed for 1,465 yards and seven touchdowns and handled the team effectively in spite of an unsettled running back picture. When Dickey left, Carlos Brown and Randy Johnson took over. Johnson and Brown remain as the backup quarterbacks. Surprising Eric Torkelson, a third-year running back from Connecticut, won a starting running back berth ahead of Willard Harrell, who led the Packers with 435 yards rushing. John Brockington, who closed out 1976 with an 89-yard day, his best of the season, has run for a total of just 840 yards in his last two seasons after becoming the first NFL runner ever to rush for 1,000 yards in each of his first three seasons. However, Brockington's offensive backfield coach, Bob Lord, feels the former Ohio State All-America has regained his earlier form. Barty Smith also is a running back candidate. Gale Gillingham, one of the finest guards ever to play the game, has retired. The Packers have high hopes for their offensive line, however. Mark Koncar, the club's number one draft choice last year, is a superior lineman at left tackle. Mel Jackson, a twelfth-round choice a year ago, likely will step into Gillingham's position at right guard. Another possibility at guard is second-round draft pick Greg Koch, a 254-pounder from Arkansas, who played guard and tackle in college. Left guard Bruce Van Dyke, at age 33, is a steady performer, as is right tackle Dick Himes, 31. Wide receiver Ken Payne caught 58 passes in 1975 but only 33 last year, when he was double-teamed often. Gerald Tinker, the Olympic sprinter who missed 1976 with knee surgery, could relieve some of the pressure on Payne. Ollie Smith and Steve Odom also are possibilities at wide receiver. Tight end Rich McGeorge, the second leading receiver on the club with 24 catches last year, is solid.

Defense: Changes are likely on the defensive line. Clarence Williams and Alden Roche are the returning starters but that could change if the Packers' two first-round draft choices—both ends—are as good as the scouts say they are. Mike Butler of Kansas and Ezra Johnson of Morris Brown are both big, mobile youngsters. The tackles who played the most last year—Dave Pureifory, Dave Roller, and Mike McCoy—also will be in a dogfight among themselves and with reserve Bob Barber, whom the coaches feel has great potential. At the outside linebacker spots, Gary Weaver, a $100 waiver bargain from Oakland, and Fred Carr appear set, but Don Hansen will have to fight off Jim Carter, who suffered a broken leg in 1975 and a broken arm in 1976, at middle linebacker. Cornerbacks M.C. McCoy, a rookie a year ago, and Willie Buchanon and safeties Steve Luke and Johnnie Gray are not set yet. McCoy was Perry Smith's backup, but Smith played out his option and was traded to St. Louis. Luke and Steve Wagner, a second-year man, will battle for the strong safety job with seven-year veteran Charley Hall. The Packers intercepted 11 passes last year and permitted opponents to complete 55.4 percent of their passes. Rookie Tim Moresco of Syracuse, a sixth-round draft choice, will also vie for a job in the secondary.

Special Teams: David Beverly averaged 37 yards a punt. Chester Marcol, the NFL scoring leader in 1972 and 1974, was ailing in 1975 and had an off year in 1976 with 10 of 19 field goals. Gray was a steady punt returner and M.C. McCoy returned kickoffs an average of 25.4 yards. The Packers covered their own kicks well, permitting an average of just 5.6 yards on punt returns and 17.8 on kickoffs.

1977: If the high draft choices can make an impact and if Brockington returns to form, the Packers will be a greatly improved team.

1976 SCORES	G.B.	Opp.
Sept. 12 SAN FRANCISCO	14	26
Sept. 19 at St. Louis	0	29
Sept. 26 at Cincinnati	7	28
Oct. 3 DETROIT	24	14
Oct. 10 SEATTLE (Milwaukee)	27	20
Oct. 17 PHILADELPHIA	28	13
Oct. 24 at Oakland	14	18
Oct. 31 at Detroit	6	27
Nov. 7 NEW ORLEANS (Milwaukee)	32	27
Nov. 14 at Chicago	13	24
Nov. 21 MINNESOTA (Milwaukee)	10	17
Nov. 28 CHICAGO	10	16
Dec. 5 at Minnesota	9	20
Dec. 12 at Atlanta	24	20
Won 5 Lost 9	**218**	**299**

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	Att.	Yards	Avg.	Long	TD
Willard Harrell	130	435	3.3	56	3
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD**	**Int.**
Lynn Dickey	243	115	1,465	47.3	7	14
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Ken Payne	33	467	14.2	57t	4
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**	**Pts.**
Chester Marcol	0	10-19	24-27	54
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Johnnie Gray	4	101	25.2	67	1

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1. Mike Butler	DE	Kansas
Ezra Johnson from Oakland	DE	Morris Brown
2. Greg Koch	DT	Arkansas
3. Choice to Houston		
Rick Scribner from Denver	G	Idaho State
4. Choice to Pittsburgh		
5. Nathan Simpson	RB	Tennessee State

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense		Defense	
89 Ollie Smith	WR	83 Clarence Williams	LE
79 Mark Koncar	LT	76 M. P. McCoy	LT
61 Bruce Van Dyke	LG	75 Dave Pureifory	RT
54 Larry McCarren	C	87 Alden Roche	RE
71 Mel Jackson	RG	52 Gary Weaver	LLB
72 Dick Himes	RT	58 Don Hansen	MLB
81 Rich McGeorge	TE	53 Fred Carr	RLB
85 Ken Payne	WR	28 Willie Buchanon	LCB
10 Lynn Dickey	QB	29 M. C. McCoy	RCB
26 Eric Torkelson	RB	46 Steve Luke	LS
42 John Brockington	RB	24 Johnnie Gray	RS
13 Chester Marcol	K	11 David Beverly	P

Los Angeles Rams
NFC Western Division 10-3-1
Coach: Chuck Knox

Quarterback Riddle Is Rams' Only Unsolved Problem

Monte Jackson led the NFL in interceptions.

Overview: If you believe some experts, you might think the only problem Los Angeles coach Chuck Knox has is at quarterback. And you know what? They might be right!

Offense: When the 1976 season started, James Harris was the number one quarterback in Los Angeles and Pat Haden and Ron Jaworski were the reserves. But when an injury struck Harris in the fifth preseason game, Jaworski got a chance to play. When Jaworski was injured in the opener, Haden stepped in. And no matter who was carrying out Knox's play-calling, the Rams continued to win. Harris took over again in the third week, and seven days later in Miami he passed for 436 yards in a 31-28 victory over the Dolphins. But the following week he was sacked 10 times in a 16-0 loss to San Francisco, was injured again, and Haden started six of the last nine games of the season. Now Jaworski is gone, Joe Namath is in camp, and the quarterback situation is still unsettled. "We'll line them up the way they finished last year," said Knox, meaning, it'll be Haden, Harris, and Namath, in that order when training camp opens. One constant, however, is the rest of the offensive machinery, which features 1,168-yard running back Lawrence McCutcheon, 688-yard fullback John Cappelletti, and two of the finest wide receivers in the game—Harold Jackson and Ron Jessie. Jackson's 39 receptions went for an average of 19.3 yards; Jessie's 34 averaged 22.9. The running backs, including reserves Jim Bertelsen and Cullen Bryant, also can catch the ball. The Rams' offensive line is one of the finest in the game, even though two of its members completed only their second year in the NFL in 1976. Tom Mack, the perennial all-pro, is the left guard. Left tackle Doug France and right guard Dennis Harrah, a pair of first-round draft choices in 1975, have outstanding potential. Center Rich Saul was a Pro Bowl selection last season, and right tackle John Williams is a dependable nine-year veteran. Tight end Bob Klein announced his retirement, but Charles Young, who came from Philadelphia in the trade for Jaworski, averaged 54 receptions a season in four years.

Defense: It really won't be the same when the Rams' defense takes the field. Tackle Merlin Olsen, a member of that unit for 15 memorable seasons, has retired. Olsen's spot at left tackle will be filled by one of two promising young players—Cody Jones, 26, or Mike Fanning, 24. The other tackle, Larry Brooks, is one of the game's most underrated players, and the ends, Jack Youngblood and Fred Dryer, are both perennial Pro Bowl types. The Rams limited opponents to a meager 112 yards a game by rushing in 1976 and a strong set of linebackers was one reason why. Jim Youngblood, Jack Reynolds, and Isiah Robertson average barely five years of NFL experience but they play with a field-smartness beyond their years. The defensive backfield, once considered weak, has become a tremendous force. Rod Perry and Monte Jackson patrol the corners, and with 8 and 10 interceptions in 1976, they may be the quickest pair in the NFL. Dave Elmendorf teams with Bill Simpson at safety. The four deep men helped the Rams lead the NFL in interceptions with 32.

Special Teams: This is one of the few potential problem areas on the team. Tom Dempsey had an off-year as a placekicker in 1976. It became evident when his field goal try against Minnesota in the NFC championship game was blocked and resulted in a Vikings' touchdown. Rusty Jackson's 39-yard punting average was satisfactory, but he was shaky in the playoffs. The Rams signed USC's Glen Walker, who both punts and placekicks. Cullen Bryant had an excellent 11.1-yard average returning punts, and 28.7 average on kickoffs.

1977: Los Angeles has a 44-11-1 record under Knox, and the Rams will be contenders again . . . no matter who's at quarterback.

1976 SCORES	L.A.	Opp.
Sept. 12 at Atlanta	30	14
Sept. 19 at Minnesota	10	10
Sept. 26 NEW YORK GIANTS	24	10
Oct. 3 at Miami	31	28
Oct. 11 SAN FRANCISCO (Monday)	0	16
Oct. 17 CHICAGO	20	12
Oct. 24 at New Orleans	16	10
Oct. 31 SEATTLE	45	6
Nov. 8 at Cincinnati (Monday)	12	20
Nov. 14 ST. LOUIS	28	30
Nov. 21 at San Francisco	23	3
Nov. 28 NEW ORLEANS	33	14
Dec. 4 ATLANTA (Saturday)	59	0
Dec. 11 at Detroit (Saturday)	20	17
Won 10 Lost 3 Tied 1	**351**	**190**
Divisional Playoff		
Dec. 19 at Dallas	14	12
NFC Championship		
Dec. 26 at Minnesota	13	24

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	Att.	Yards	Avg.	Long	TD
L. McCutcheon	291	1,168	4.0	40	9
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD**	**Int.**
Pat Haden	105	60	896	57.1	8	4
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Harold Jackson	39	751	19.3	65	5
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**	**Pts.**
Tom Dempsey	0	17-26	36-44	87
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Monte Jackson	10	173	17.3	46	3

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1.	Bob Brudzinski	LB	Ohio State
2.	Nolan Cromwell from Seattle	DB	Kansas
2.	Bill Waddy from Washington through San Diego Choice to Seattle	WR	Colorado
3.	Ed Fulton from San Diego	G	Maryland
	Wendell Tyler	RB	UCLA
4.	Vince Ferragamo from New Orleans	QB	Nebraska
	Eary Jones	DE	Memphis State
5.	Donnie Hickman from Washington	G	USC
	Jeff Williams	G	Rhode Island

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense		Defense	
29 Harold Jackson	WR	85 Jack Youngblood	LE
77 Doug France	LT	79 Mike Fanning	LT
65 Tom Mack	LG	90 Larry Brooks	RT
61 Rich Saul	C	89 Fred Dryer	RE
60 Dennis Harrah	RG	53 Jim Youngblood	LLB
75 John Williams	RT	64 Jack Reynolds	MLB
83 Terry Nelson	TE	58 Isiah Robertson	RLB
81 Ron Jessie	WR	49 Rod Perry	LCB
11 Pat Haden	QB	28 Monte Jackson	RCB
30 L. McCutcheon	RB	42 Dave Elmendorf	LS
22 John Cappelletti	RB	48 Bill Simpson	RS
10 Tom Dempsey	K	9 Rusty Jackson	P

Minnesota Vikings
NFC Central Division 11-2-1
Coach: Bud Grant

Age and Experience Put Vikings in Prime Position Again

Rookie Sammy White was a blur most of 1976.

Overview: The Vikings may have lost the Super Bowl, but they haven't lost their tag of invincibility, in spite of encroaching age at some key positions. Minnesota staged a number of great escapes to post an 11-2-1 record in 1976, and its victory over the Rams in the NFC championship game showed that the Vikings frequently win by doing what great teams have to do: taking advantage of every opportunity.

Offense: Fran Tarkenton, the 37-year-old all-time leading passer in the NFL, is back to guide an offense that rolled up 4,859 yards, fourth in the NFC. He threw more passes (412) than anyone except Jim Zorn of Seattle (439) and was the second leading percentage thrower (nearly 62 percent). With an eye on the future, the Vikings used a first-round draft choice to select Rice quarterback Tommy Kramer. The Vikings' primary offensive weapon is Chuck Foreman, the 207-pound halfback who combines power and breakaway speed and remarkable balance. Foreman seems to make the big play whenever it's needed. He ran for 1,155 yards and caught 55 passes for 567 more, accounting for more than 35 percent of Minnesota's total yardage. Before 1976 began, the Vikings' wide receiving situation was uncertain, shaky at best. But when Ahmad Rashad was obtained from Seattle to team with rookie Sammy White, coach Bud Grant knew his worries were over. They combined to grab 104 passes. White caught 51 and displayed an ability to get hit hard and still hold onto the ball. The offense makes much of this happen with great protection from two Pro Bowl players on the right side, tackle Ron Yary and guard Ed White. Mick Tinglehoff returns at center for his sixteenth season. Tackle Steve Riley and guard Charles Goodrum are solid but unspectacular on the left side. Guard Dennis Swilley of Texas A&M was a second round draft choice.

Defense: The Vikings didn't use any of their nine draft picks to take a defensive lineman, which shows great confidence that the aging Purple People Eaters can do the job once again. And it is an imposing lineup, at any age: left end Carl Eller, 35; left tackle Doug Sutherland, 29; right tackle Alan Page, 32; right end Jim Marshall, 39. In the final regular season game of 1976, those four men helped stop Miami seven times inside the 7-yard line in the first quarter. In the NFC title game against the Rams, Los Angeles had a first down at the Vikings' 6. Three plays gained just five yards, and a field goal try was blocked and Bobby Bryant ran the loose ball 90 yards to a Minnesota touchdown. Jeff Siemon is one of the NFL's premier middle linebackers and Matt Blair is an emerging star at left linebacker. Blair was the team's big play leader last year with three blocked kicks, two interceptions, and seven fumble recoveries. The rightside linebacker, Wally Hilgenberg, 35, could be pushed by fourth-year pro Fred McNeill. The Vikings' secondary lacks speed but not savvy. Free safety Paul Krause has 76 interceptions in 13 pro seasons, only three behind Emlen Tunnell's all-time record. Bryant and Nate Wright, who intercepted seven passes in 1976, are the incumbent cornerbacks, while Jeff Wright and Krause, who added three interceptions last year, patrol the safety spots.

Special Teams: The special teams worked like a Swiss watch when it came to making big plays. Minnesota blocked 16 kicks in 1976—seven conversions, six field goals, and three punts. Nate Allen blocked Tom Dempsey's field goal try in the NFC championship game against the Rams. Rookie Leonard Willis handled the punt and kickoff return chores adequately. The punting of Neil Clabo was steady if unspectacular (38.8 average). Fred Cox (19 of 31) was a consistent placekicker from less than 30 yards.

1977: They've been saying that the Vikings are getting old for a long time, yet when Bud Grant's team went to Super Bowl XI it was the fourth time Minnesota had been there, the most by any team. Since 1970, the Vikings have a 75-22-1 record, best in the NFL. And the Vikings will be tough again in 1977.

1976 SCORES	Minn.	Opp.
Sept. 12 at New Orleans	40	9
Sept. 19 LOS ANGELES*	10	10
Sept. 26 at Detroit	10	9
Oct. 4 PITTSBURGH (Monday)	17	6
Oct. 10 CHICAGO	20	19
Oct. 17 NEW YORK GIANTS	24	7
Oct. 24 at Philadelphia	31	12
Oct. 31 at Chicago	13	14
Nov. 7 DETROIT	31	23
Nov. 14 SEATTLE	27	21
Nov. 21 vs. Green Bay (Milwaukee)	17	10
Nov. 29 at San Francisco (Monday)	16	20
Dec. 5 GREEN BAY	20	9
Dec. 11 at Miami (Saturday)	29	7
Won 11 Lost 2 Tied 1	**305**	**176**
Divisional Playoff		
Dec. 18 WASHINGTON	35	20
NFC Championship		
Dec. 26 LOS ANGELES	24	13
Super Bowl XI		
Jan. 9 Oakland	14	32

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	Att.	Yards	Avg.	Long	TD
Chuck Foreman	278	1,155	4.2	46	13
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD**	**Int.**
Fran Tarkenton	412	255	2,961	61.9	17	8
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Chuck Foreman	55	567	10.3	41t	1
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**	**Pts.**
Fred Cox	0	19-31	32-36	89
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Nate Wright	7	47	6.7	21	0

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1.	Tommy Kramer	QB	Rice
2.	Dennis Swilley	G	Texas A&M
3.	Tom Hannon	DB	Michigan State
4.	Choice to Seattle		
5.	Ken Moore	TE	Northern Illinois

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense		Defense	
28 Ahmad Rashad	WR	81 Carl Eller	LE
78 Steve Riley	LT	69 Doug Sutherland	LT
68 Charles Goodrum	LG	88 Alan Page	RT
53 Mick Tingelhoff	C	70 Jim Marshall	RE
62 Ed White	RG	59 Matt Blair	LLB
73 Ron Yary	RT	50 Jeff Siemon	MLB
83 Stu Voigt	TE	58 Wally Hilgenberg	RLB
85 Sammy White	WR	43 Nate Wright	LCB
10 Fran Tarkenton	QB	20 Bobby Bryant	RCB
33 Brent McClanahan	RB	23 Jeff Wright	LS
44 Chuck Foreman	RB	22 Paul Krause	RS
14 Fred Cox	K	12 Neil Clabo	P

New Orleans Saints
NFC Western Division 4-10
Coach: Hank Stram

Saints' Hopes for Improvement Are on Solid Ground

Muncie wears glasses behind his face mask.

Overview: The Saints broke 24 team records under new coach Hank Stram in 1976, and they won four games (twice as many as the year before), proving a team can rebuild while improving its record at the same time.

Offense: Chuck Muncie, a first-round draft choice last year from California, and Tony Galbreath, number two pick from Missouri, made dazzling debuts in their rookie seasons. Muncie, the bespectacled bruiser, rumbled for 659 yards and a 4.4-yard average, caught 31 passes, and showed greater speed than most 220-pounders—and all of this despite playing on a sore ankle most of the season. Galbreath ran for 570 yards and led the team with 54 pass receptions. The quarterback situation is unsettled. Archie Manning missed all of 1976 with tendinitis in his throwing arm. Bobby Douglass and Bobby Scott shared the job in 1976, passing for a combined 2,353 yards. But Manning, the club's quarterback for most of the previous five seasons, could regain his job. Nine different men started on the offensive line last year. Left tackle Marv Montgomery, obtained from Denver on waivers, replaced Tom Wickert; Terry Stieve divided playing time with Kurt Schumacher at left guard, and also filled in for Emanual Zanders at right guard. Center John Hill, a starter in all 14 games last year, is solid and underrated. Two giant-sized fifth-round draft choices—288-pound Dave Lafary of Purdue and 270-pound Dave Hubbard of Brigham Young—are candidates for tackle spots. The Saints have speed and quickness at one wide receiver spot, where Olympic sprinter Larry Burton and trackman Tinker Owens alternate. The other wide receiver, Don Herrmann, led the team with 34 receptions in 1976. The Saints are hopeful that Joel Parker, who caught 41 passes in 1974, will come back from knee surgery after missing an entire season. Henry Childs, who grabbed 26 passes last year, will be the starting tight end.

Defense: Linebacking is a Saints' strength. Joe Federspiel, the man in the middle, directs a defense that recorded a club record 39 sacks last year. Federspiel led the team with 122 tackles, 87 of them unassisted. Federspiel's linebacking mate on the left side, Jim Merlo, was voted the club's co-most valuable player (with Galbreath); Merlo was in on 115 tackles. And Greg Westbrooks, the other linebacker, showed great potential in his second pro season. The likely front four alignment—from left to right, Bob Pollard, Elex Price, Derland Moore, and Steve Baumgartner—is a good one. Pollard missed the last half of the 1976 season following knee surgery; his replacement, Andy Dorris, showed solid skills. Other prime candidates here are first-round draft choice Joe Campbell of Maryland, an end, and second-round selection Mike Fultz of Nebraska, a tackle. The Saints intercepted just 12 passes in 1976 so it wouldn't surprise many people if there were a few changes in the secondary. The incumbents are Ernie Jackson and Maurice Spencer on the corners and Chuck Crist and Tom Myers at the safeties. Third-round draft choice Bob Watts was a linebacker at Boston College, but could be switched to safety. Craig Cassady, son of former all-pro Howard (Hopalong) Cassady, is another candidate for a safety spot.

Special Teams: Punter Tom Blanchard retired. The Saints signed Oklahoma State punter Cliff Parsley, who averaged 42.7 yards per punt in college. Placekicker Rich Szaro was consistent, hitting 18 of 23 field goals. But he will have competition, too, in Raphael Septien, who kicked nine over 50 yards in three seasons at Southwest Louisiana. Galbreath did double duty as a return man on kickoffs. Clarence Chapman and Leon McQuay could be tried as punt and kickoff return men. The punt and kickoff coverage teams had some problems last year, giving up 11.6 yards per punt return, the third poorest mark in the NFL, and 25.2 yards on kickoffs, highest mark in the league.

1977: The Saints showed they can play solid football. Their losses came by an average of only 6.6 points. Things look better for Stram with his strong running game and good linebackers, but Los Angeles and San Francisco are tough hurdles to overcome in the NFC West.

1976 SCORES	Balt.	Opp.
Sept. 12 MINNESOTA	9	40
Sept. 19 DALLAS	6	24
Sept. 26 at Kansas City	27	17
Oct. 3 HOUSTON	26	31
Oct. 10 ATLANTA	30	0
Oct. 17 at San Francisco	3	33
Oct. 24 LOS ANGELES	10	16
Oct. 31 at Atlanta	20	23
Nov. 7 vs. Green Bay (Milwaukee)	27	32
Nov. 14 DETROIT	17	16
Nov. 21 at Seattle	51	27
Nov. 28 at Los Angeles	14	33
Dec. 5 at New England	6	27
Dec. 12 at SAN FRANCISCO	7	27
Won 4 Lost 10	**253**	**346**

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	Att.	Yards	Avg.	Long	TD
Chuck Muncie	148	652	4.4	51	2
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD**	**Int.**
Bobby Douglass	212	103	1,288	48.6	4	8
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Tony Galbreath	54	420	7.8	35	1
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**	**Pts.**
Rich Szaro	0	18-33	25-29	79
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Jim Merlo	4	142	35.5	83	2

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1. Joe Campbell	DE	Maryland
2. Mike Fultz	DT	Nebraska
3. Bob Watts	LB	Boston College
4. Choice to Los Angeles		
5. Dave Lafary	T	Purdue
Dave Hubbard from Baltimore	T	Brigham Young

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense		Defense	
80 Larry Burton	WR	82 Bob Pollard	LE
77 Marv Montgomery	LT	75 Elex Price	LT
68 Terry Stieve	LG	74 Derland Moore	RT
62 John Hill	C	63 Steve Baumgartner	RE
79 Emanuel Zanders	RG	57 Jim Merlo	LLB
76 Don Morrison	RT	58 Joe Federspiel	MLB
85 Henry Childs	TE	60 Greg Westbrooks	RLB
87 Don Herrmann	WR	30 Ernie Jackson	LCB
10 Bobby Douglass	QB	29 Maurice Spencer	RCB
42 Chuck Muncie	RB	44 Chuck Crist	LS
34 Tony Galbreath	RB	37 Tom Myers	RS
15 Rich Szaro	K	16 Tom Blanchard	P

New York Giants
NFC Eastern Division 3-11
Coach: John McVay

McVay Plans to Pick Up Where '76 Giants Left Off

Csonka (39) led Giants in touchdowns.

Overview: From the eighth game of last year, the New York Giants were able to hold their heads up. When John McVay replaced Bill Arnsparger as Coach, the Giants were 0-7. McVay made a few changes, then won three of the remaining seven. Two of the losses, to Denver and St. Louis, were by a total of four points. There also was a two-point loss at Washington in the 1976 opener.

Offense: Nine of the 13 choices the Giants made in the draft went for offensive players, including number two choice Johnny Perkins, a wide receiver from Abilene Christian who could be stern opposition for the other wide receivers on the club, Ed Marshall, Jim Robinson, Roger Wallace, Ray Rhodes, and Walker Gillette. The quarterback spot is open, with Dennis Shaw the preseason favorite for the job. Shaw was a starter at Buffalo until Joe Ferguson emerged. Steve Ramsey, obtained from Denver in a one-for-one swap with the Giants for Craig Morton, was a starter with the Broncos, and will challenge Shaw. So will untested Jerry Golsteyn, who made a big impression in training camp a year ago, but then was injured. Randy Dean of Northwestern, a draft choice, also will vie for a spot on the team. McVay's offensive line theory is to find the best man for each position regardless of what each man is labeled. Thus he'll be able to choose the guards and tackles from Al Simpson, Tom Mullen, John Hicks, Doug Van Horn, Ron Mikolajczyk, and others who played on the line last year. Van Horn and Hicks started every game at tackle and guard, respectively, on the right side for the Giants. But the juggling act on the left side was something to behold. Mikolajczyk, Simpson, and Bill Ellenbogen all were part-time starters at left guard. Mike Gibbons saw time at left tackle, after Mullen started the first 12 games. At center, Karl Chandler and Ralph Hill alternated. Two big tackles were taken in the player draft. Fourth-round draft choice Mike Vaughan of Oklahoma, a 275-pounder, and Memphis State's Bob Jordan, taken on the sixth round, also will be given a chance. The tight end, Bob Tucker, is an excellent receiver and blocker. The Giants hope Larry Csonka rebounds from knee surgery. The former Miami Dolphin star came back to the NFL after the collapse of the World Football League, but his knee problems limited his rushing total to 569 yards, second on the team to dependable Doug Kotar's 731. Marsh White, a 220-pounder, backed up Csonka, and Gordon Bell, the 180-pound scatback, was Kotar's reserve.

Defense: Giants' opponents averaged 157.4 yards a game rushing last year, and the club made strides to reduce that figure when they went after quick, powerful Gary Jeter of USC on the first round of the player draft. Jeter helps solidify a line that already is one of the team's strengths. The incumbent ends are Jack Gregory and George Martin, who led the team in quarterback sacks; the tackles are John Mendenhall and Troy Archer. The linebackers also were a positive element for the Giants in 1976. Big Brad Van Pelt played the left side, quick Brian Kelley the right, and Harry Carson won the middle linebacker spot with surprising dependability for a rookie. Otis Rodgers, a draft choice from Iowa State, is a promising linebacker. Cornerbacks Bobby Brooks and Henry Stuckey both went out early in 1976 with knee injuries, and Bill Bryant and Jim Steinke took over. Steinke may return to free safety, with Clyde Powers on the other side. Veteran safety Rick Volk is a dependable backup.

Special Teams: Joe Danelo was the placekicker and made only 8 of 21 field goals, four of them in a 12-9 surprise of Washington. Dave Jennings had a fine 41.3 punting average. The kick returner was Jim Robinson, but his 4.4 yard average on punt returns and 22.2 average on kickoff returns showed little game-breaking ability. In hopes of improving that department, the Giants have named Gordon Bell as the number one returner as of the first day of training camp, and they hope his speed should improve the return situation.

1977: The Giants figure to improve greatly because of the coaching stability, the return of all eight of those who wound up 1976 on the injured list, plus the addition of a flock of rookies headed by the sensational Jeter.

1976 SCORES	N.O.	Opp.
Sept. 12 at Washington	17	19
Sept. 19 at Philadelphia	7	20
Sept. 26 at Los Angeles	10	24
Oct. 3 at St. Louis	21	27
Oct. 10 DALLAS	14	24
Oct. 17 at Minnesota	7	24
Oct. 24 PITTSBURGH	0	27
Oct. 31 PHILADELPHIA	0	10
Nov. 7 at Dallas	3	9
Nov. 14 WASHINGTON	12	9
Nov. 21 at Denver	13	14
Nov. 28 SEATTLE	28	16
Dec. 5 DETROIT	24	10
Dec. 12 ST. LOUIS	14	17
Won 3 Lost 11	**170**	**250**

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	Att.	Yards	Avg.	Long	TD
Doug Kotar	185	731	4.0	24	3
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD**	**Int.**
Craig Morton	284	153	1,865	53.9	9	20
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Bob Tucker	42	498	11.9	39	1
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**	**Pts.**
Joe Danelo	0	8-21	20-21	44
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Rick Volk	2	14	7.0	11	0

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1. Gary Jeter	DE	USC
2. Johnny Perkins	WR	Abilene Christian
3. Choice to Chicago		
4. Mike Vaughan	T	Oklahoma
5. Randy Dean	QB	Northwestern

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense		Defense	
89 Ed Marshall	WR	75 George Martin	LE
73 Tom Mullen	LT	64 John Mendenhall	LT
79 Al Simpson	LG	77 Troy Archer	RT
61 Karl Chandler	C	81 Jack Gregory	RE
74 John Hicks	RG	10 Brad Van Pelt	LLB
63 Doug Van Horn	RT	53 Harry Carson	MLB
38 Bob Tucker	TE	55 Brian Kelley	RLB
82 Ray Rhodes	WR	21 Bill Bryant	LCB
9 Dennis Shaw	QB	37 Bobby Brooks	RCB
44 Doug Kotar	RB	29 Clyde Powers	LS
39 Larry Csonka	RB	20 Jim Stienke	RS
18 Joe Danelo	K	13 Dave Jennings	P

Philadelphia Eagles
NFC Eastern Division 4-10
Coach: Dick Vermeil

Upgrading Is Still Vermeil's Top Priority With Eagles

Sullivan has four 100-yard games in his career.

Overview: In his first year as coach of the Eagles, Dick Vermeil promised to give every player he inherited a chance to prove his value. At the end of the season, 39 of the 43 players on the team had been with the Eagles when the season started. The Eagles lived by that philosophy for one year, but now Vermeil says, "This year we will not pass up anyone who we think might be a step better than someone we're playing with." Vermeil wasn't displeased with his 1976 team, even though it won just four games. But the new faces could make a major difference and improve the record.

Offense: The biggest change may come at quarterback. The trade that brought Ron Jaworski from the Los Angeles Rams to the Eagles for tight end Charles Young could turn the Eagles around. Jaworski is a holler guy, a leader who can set up quickly and pass with accuracy. The return of Roman Gabriel, who had missed almost an entire season with a knee injury, was pleasing to Vermeil. Gabriel needs just 571 yards to reach 30,000 in his career, which also started with the Rams. Mike Hogan and Tom Sullivan were the running backs at the end of last year. They finished with 561 and 399 yards, respectively, and both averaged more than four yards a carry. Hogan was a rookie in 1976, and Vermeil is looking for bigger things from him. James McAlister, a former running back, will be tried as a wide receiver this year. The offensive line was vastly improved last year. Tackle Stan Walters and guard Jerry Sisemore were solid performers. Fourth-year pro Guy Morriss, the center, had his best season. Tackle Ed George and guard Wade Key also were regulars, but third-year pro Jeff Bleamer figures to push both men. Guard Tommy Luken, who was on the injured reserve list last year, also is back. The wide receivers could be the key to the season for the Eagles. Harold Carmichael is one of the superb pass catchers in the NFL; in the past four seasons he has caught 222 passes and his 42 receptions last year ranked seventh in the NFC. He also showed good blocking skills. Charlie Smith, who Vermeil feels has great potential, caught 27 passes. Keith Krepfle will take over at tight end. Vermeil said he would have been concerned about the loss of a tight end the quality of Young had Krepfle not been an Eagle. He's a good receiver and blocker.

Defense: Only Seattle gave up more yards than the Eagles last year in the NFC, but Vermeil feels his experiment of sticking with the same people all of last year could be beneficial because the players now know his system. Left tackle Manny Sistrunk was the Eagles' top defensive lineman, and he'll start next to Carl Hairston at end, who played well for a rookie last year. Will Wynn started every game at right end last season, but three men shared duty at right tackle, and Pete Lazetich should help. The most solid spot on the team is linebacker. In the middle, veteran Bill Bergey was voted as the top linebacker in the NFC last year by NFL players. The Eagles, realizing the defense needed shoring up, hired a new defensive coordinator, Marion Campbell, and a new secondary coach, Fred Bruney. Vermeil additionally has said he may install a three-four defensive alignment, to take advantage of the abundance of excellent linebackers he's got. "Right now it looks like we will be in that defense the biggest percentage of the time," said Vermeil. "Bergey had maybe the best year he's ever had and much more will be expected of him on the field this year because of the new defensive system." He won't be alone. Bergey is flanked by Frank LeMaster on the left and John Bunting on the right. The secondary must improve. Cornerbacks John Outlaw and Al Clark and safeties Randy Logan and Bill Bradley figure to be tested by the Eagles' first two draft picks—on the fifth and sixth rounds—Skip Sharp of Kansas and Kevin Russell of Tennessee State. Artimus Parker, who started only one game, also is a possibility.

Special Teams: Horst Muhlmann hit every field goal he tried inside the 40. Spike Jones's punting average was 36.6, but he put 23 punts down inside the opponents 20. Larry Marshall handled kicks adequately.

1977: The Eagles will be better, no doubt. But upgrading dramatically in the NFC East—with teams such St. Louis, Dallas, and Washington—won't be easy.

1976 SCORES	Phil.	Opp.
Sept. 12 at Dallas	7	27
Sept. 19 NEW YORK GIANTS	20	7
Sept. 27 WASHINGTON (Monday)	17	20
Oct. 3 at Atlanta	14	13
Oct. 10 at St. Louis	14	33
Oct. 17 at Green Bay	13	28
Oct. 24 MINNESOTA	12	31
Oct. 31 at New York Giants	10	0
Nov. 7 ST. LOUIS	14	17
Nov. 14 at Cleveland	3	24
Nov. 21 OAKLAND	7	26
Nov. 28 at Washington	0	24
Dec. 5 DALLAS	7	26
Dec. 12 SEATTLE	27	10
Won 4 Lost 10	**165**	**286**

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	Att.	Yards	Avg.	Long	TD
Mike Hogan	123	561	4.6	32	0
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD**	**Int.**
Mike Boryla	246	123	1,247	50.0	9	14
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Harold Carmichael	42	503	12.0	24	5
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**	**Pts.**
Horst Muhlmann	0	11-16	18-19	51
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Bill Bradley	2	63	31.5	52	0

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1.	Choice to Cincinnati		
2.	Choice to Oakland		
3.	Choice to Dallas		
4.	Choice to Kansas City		
5.	Skip Sharp	DB	Kansas

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense		Defense	
17 Harold Carmichael	WR	78 Carl Hairston	LE
75 Stan Walters	LT	79 Manny Sistrunk	LT
72 Wade Key	LG	73 Pete Lazetich	RT
50 Guy Morriss	C	71 Will Wynn	RE
76 Jerry Sisemore	RG	55 Frank LeMaster	LLB
64 Ed George	RT	66 Bill Bergey	MLB
84 Keith Krepfle	TE	95 John Bunting	RLB
85 Charles Smith	WR	20 John Outlaw	LCB
7 Ron Jaworski	QB	21 Al Clark	RCB
25 Tom Sullivan	RB	41 Randy Logan	LS
35 Mike Hogan	RB	28 Bill Bradley	RS
16 Horst Muhlmann	K	6 Spike Jones	P

St. Louis Cardinals
NFC Eastern Division 10-4
Coach: Don Coryell

Cardinals Tiring of Life at the Threshold

Jim Otis, at 225 pounds, rarely uses finesse.

Overview: Don Coryell came to the NFL with a reputation as a "big play" coach at San Diego State. In 1976 his St. Louis Cardinals continued Coryell's tradition with one of the most devastating offenses in the league, one that produced 366.9 yards per game (only Oakland, 370.7, averaged more). The Cardinals rebounded from an early season slip against San Diego (43-24) and played well. Still, two defeats to Washington, 20-10 in the mud of RFK Stadium and 16-10 in St. Louis, made the Cardinals the first NFC team to go 10-4 and not make the playoffs. It was an incongruous season for Coryell, the last-minute magician who wins almost all the close ones.

Offense: Jim Hart's cool-hand manner produced 218 pass completions in 388 attempts for 2,946 yards (third best in the NFL) and 18 touchdowns. Hart is just as good as ever, but as insurance the Cardinals chose 6-foot 2-inch quarterback Steve Pisarkiewicz of Missouri on the first round of the draft. The sudden development of Ike Harris as a pass receiver helped increase Hart's statistics. Harris, a second-year pro from Iowa State, caught 15 passes as a 1975 rookie but 52 last year to lead the team. That took a lot of the double-teaming pressure off speedster Mel Gray, who has traditionally been Hart's favorite target. With Terry Metcalf injured for part of the season, Jim Otis carried 233 times (third highest in the club's history) for 891 yards. Metcalf missed only two games and remained a feared runner and receiver. The reserves, Steve Jones and Wayne Morris, are solid journeymen, and running back George Franklin of Texas A&I was drafted on the second round. Hart was sacked only 17 times last year. One reason was his fast delivery; another was great protection from a superior and still-developing offensive line. The right side of the line, the one the Cardinals like to run to most, is manned by Conrad Dobler and Dan Dierdorf, two Pro Bowl selections. The left side, also high quality, has Roger Finnie and Bob Young. Another Pro Bowler, Tom Banks, is the center. The Cardinals were fortunate that the injuries that hit their ball-handling stars were minor. And they were further fortunate that none of the linemen, including top tight end J.V. Cain, sustained an injury which forced them to miss games. Finnie, Young, Banks, Dobler, Dierdorf, and Cain started every game. Otis, meanwhile, had to give way in the fifth week to Jones; Gray was injured on and off, and Pat Tilley gave him some rest; Tilley also spelled Harris when he was hurt, as did Jackie Smith.

Defense: The Cardinals gave up 292 yards a game last year, so a few changes are likely. First, Norm Thompson, who had played out his option, was signed by Baltimore. Then the Cardinals obtained Perry Smith from Green Bay; he and Lee Nelson will vie for that job. Roger Wehrli, the club interception leader with four, is the other cornerback. The Cardinals are pleased with Ken Reaves and Mike Sensibaugh at safety, and Jeff Severson as backup. The defensive line is back intact after helping the team amass 31 quarterback sacks. Bob Bell and John Zook are two quick 250-pound ends. Charlie Davis and Mike Dawson provide good inside pressure. Ron Yankowski will fight for an end spot. Larry Stallings has retired, so his linebacking spot will go to Al Beauchamp unless any of three draft choices—Kurt Allerman of Penn State, Andy Spiva of Tennessee, or Eric Williams of USC—can challenge. Tim Kearney and Mark Arneson are the other linebackers. Reaves and Sensibaugh started every game last year, as did Wehrli. Nelson started just two when Thompson was out.

Special Teams: Metcalf is still a potent punt and kickoff returner. He balked at such extra duty early last season, but still wound up averaging 11.1 on punts. The coaches hope Terry Joyce's 36.4-yard punting average improves. Jim Bakken was one of the finest field goal kickers in the league, hitting 20 of 27 field goals last year. He also made 33 of 35 extra points.

1977: St. Louis was just a shade away from a playoff last year, and all the same offensive people who made the breathtaking plays of 1976 are back. The Cardinals will contend again.

1976 SCORES	St.L.	Opp.
Sept. 12 at Seattle	30	24
Sept. 19 GREEN BAY	29	0
Sept. 26 at San Diego	24	43
Oct. 3 NEW YORK GIANTS	27	21
Oct. 10 PHILADELPHIA	33	14
Oct. 17 DALLAS	21	17
Oct. 25 at Washington (Monday)	10	20
Oct. 31 SAN FRANCISCO	23	20
Nov. 7 at Philadelphia	17	14
Nov. 14 at Los Angeles	30	28
Nov. 21 WASHINGTON	10	16
Nov. 25 at Dallas (Thanksgiving)	14	19
Dec. 4 BALTIMORE (Saturday)	24	17
Dec. 12 at New York Giants	17	14
Won 10 Lost 4	309	267

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	Att.	Yards	Avg.	Long	TD
Jim Otis	233	891	3.8	23	2
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD**	**Int.**
Jim Hart	388	218	2,946	56.2	18	13
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Ike Harris	52	782	15.0	40	1
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**	**Pts.**
Jim Bakken	0	20-27	33-35	93
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Norm Thompson	4	83	20.8	38	0

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1.	Steve Pisarkiewicz from Washington Choice to Atlanta	QB	Missouri
2.	George Franklin	RB	Texas A&I
3.	Kurt Allerman	LB	Penn State
4.	Choice to Cincinnati		
5.	Ernest Lee	DT	Texas
	Andy Spiva from New England	LB	Tennessee

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense			Defense	
85	Mel Gray	WR	79 Bob Bell	LE
60	Roger Finnie	LT	76 Charlie Davis	LT
64	Bob Young	LG	73 Mike Dawson	RT
54	Tom Banks	C	63 John Zook	RE
66	Conrad Dobler	RG	58 Al Beauchamp	LLB
72	Dan Dierdorf	RT	56 Tim Kearney	MLB
88	J. V. Cain	TE	57 Mark Arneson	RLB
84	Ike Harris	WR	38 Lee Nelson	LCB
17	Jim Hart	QB	22 Roger Wehrli	RCB
21	Terry Metcalf	RB	36 Ken Reaves	LS
35	Jim Otis	RB	20 Mike Sensibaugh	RS
25	Jim Bakken	K	87 Terry Joyce	P

San Francisco 49ers
NFC Western Division 8-6
Coach: Ken Meyer

New 49ers' Ownership Seeks Fortune Via "The Gold Rush"

Del Williams's 1,203 yards was third in NFL.

Overview: At one point last year, the 49ers were 6-1 and appeared headed for a miraculous rebound from a 5-9 season in 1975. Then bad luck and four close defeats dropped the 49ers to 8-6 at season's end. Monte Clark, the head coach of that comeback team, is no longer with the club. His replacement, Ken Meyer, had been the Los Angeles Rams' offensive coordinator. He retained Clark's staff of assistants.

Offense: The 49ers have the makings of an awesome running game with four-year pros Delvin Williams and Wilbur Jackson. Both have power and speed, but Williams showed exceptional talents last year with 1,203 yards and a 4.9-yard average, the highest of any regular in the NFC. With Jackson gaining 792 yards, the tandem was just five yards shy of a total 2,000. Jackson added to the attack by catching a team-leading 33 passes. Kermit Johnson is an able backup runner. The wide receivers last year were Gene Washington, Jim Lash, and Steve Rivera, but the 49ers were hurt when sprinter Willie McGee, who came to San Francisco from Tampa Bay in a trade for quarterback Steve Spurrier, broke a leg in the fifth game. McGee, a legitimate world-class sprinter, could reclaim a starting job. Gene Washington caught 33 passes last year. Another player who will make a strong bid for a starting spot is the club's top draft choice (third round), Elmo Boyd of Eastern Kentucky, a high-quality athlete with great speed (4.5 for the 40) and strength. The quarterback spot will be filled by a healthy (hopefully) Jim Plunkett. A shoulder injury hampered his passing last year, but an off-season of rest and recuperation reportedly has healed the damage. Scott Bull and Marty Domres are Plunkett's backups. The 49ers' quarterbacks were sacked 34 times last year; some of the problems in the offensive line were the result of injuries. Steve Lawson at guard and Jean Barrett at tackle started every game on the left side, and Randy Cross and John Watson split time at center. Watson and Andy Maurer alternated at the right guard spot, with Keith Fahnhorst playing most of the year at right tackle. All of them are back healthy this year, as is guard Woody Peoples, who was injured all of last year, and they will get some assistance from tight end Tom Mitchell, a 230-pound blocking specialist who caught 20 passes last year.

Defense: They're calling the 49ers' front four "The Gold Rush" after what it did in 1976. Marauding in enemy backfields, the 49ers led the league in quarterback sacks with 61, only six short of the NFL record (67 by the 1967 Oakland Raiders). The front line of left end Tommy Hart, tackles Jimmy Webb and Cleveland Elam, and right end Cedrick Hardman was helped later in the year by Tony Cline, who was acquired from Oakland. Hardman, who broke an ankle late in the season, will get his job back this fall; Cline will be the backup behind both Hart and Hardman. The 49ers' league-leading sack total produced 573 yards lost. That's an average of 41 yards per game the opponents went in the wrong direction. Hart, the 250-pound perennial all-pro, had 16 sacks himself. The defense gave up just 127 yards a game rushing in 1976, and three fierce linebackers—Skip Vanderbundt, Frank Nunley, and Dave Washington—had a lot to do with that. Nunley will try to come back from his third knee operation. Ed Bradley, acquired from Seattle, is a potential starter at middle linebacker. Cornerback Jimmy Johnson retired after 16 sensational seasons, but the 49ers feel second-year pro Eddie Lewis can step in adequately. Bruce Taylor is the other cornerback, with Mel Phillips and Ralph McGill at safeties. A fourth-round draft choice, Stan Black of Mississippi State, is a candidate for a spot in the backfield.

Special Teams: Kermit Johnson's 28.4-yard kickoff return average, and McGill's 10.3-yard punt return average were among the NFL's best. Tom Wittum's punts averaged 40.9 yards. Steve Mike-Mayer hit 16 of 28 field goals and showed good range but was erratic. Mike-Mayer may get a challenge from ninth-round draft pick David Posey of Florida.

1977: With a potent ground game, a healthy Jim Plunkett, pass receiving potential, and a stout defense, the 49ers could challenge the Rams' supremacy in the NFC West.

1976 SCORES	S.F.	Opp.
Sept. 12 at Green Bay	26	14
Sept. 19 CHICAGO	12	19
Sept. 26 at Seattle	37	21
Oct. 3 NEW YORK JETS	17	6
Oct. 11 at Los Angeles (Monday)	16	0
Oct. 17 NEW ORLEANS	33	3
Oct. 23 ATLANTA (Saturday)	15	0
Oct. 31 at St. Louis	20	23
Nov. 7 WASHINGTON	21	24
Nov. 14 at Atlanta	16	21
Nov. 21 LOS ANGELES	3	23
Nov. 29 MINNESOTA (Monday)	20	16
Dec. 5 at San Diego	7	13
Dec. 12 at New Orleans	27	7
Won 8 Lost 6	**270**	**190**

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	Att.	Yards	Avg.	Long	TD
Delvin Williams	248	1,203	4.9	80t	9
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD** **Int.**
Jim Plunkett	243	126	1,592	51.9	13 16
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Wilbur Jackson	34	344	10.1	32	1
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**		**PAT**	**Pts.**
Steve Mike-Mayer	0	16-28		26-30	74
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Bruce Rhodes	3	42	14.0	30	0

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1.	Choice to New England		
2.	Choice to New England		
3.	Elmer Boyd	WR	Eastern Kentucky
	from Houston		
	Choice to New York Jets		
4.	Stan Black	DB	Mississippi State
5.	Choice to Buffalo		

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense		Defense	
18 Gene Washington	WR	53 Tommy Hart	LE
77 Jean Barrett	LT	74 Jimmy Webb	LT
65 Steve Lawson	LG	72 Cleveland Elam	RT
67 John Watson	C	86 Cedrick Hardman	RE
61 Andy Maurer	RG	52 Skip Vanderbundt	LLB
71 Keith Fahnhorst	RT	57 Frank Nunley	MLB
84 Tom Mitchell	TE	50 Dave Washington	RLB
87 Jim Lash	WR	22 Eddie Lewis	LCB
16 Jim Plunkett	QB	44 Bruce Taylor	RCB
24 Delvin Williams	RB	32 Mel Phillips	LS
40 Wilbur Jackson	RB	49 Ralph McGill	RS
10 Steve Mike-Mayer	K	13 Tom Wittum	P

Tampa Bay Buccaneers
NFC Central Division 0-14
Coach: John McKay

The Hard Luck Bucs: Constructing a New Trojan Horse?

Relying on Trojans, McKay chose Ricky Bell.

Overview: Tampa Bay led the league in 1976 in losses (14), players on the injured reserve list (17), and youth (average age 24 years per man). But without losing his wry sense of humor, coach John McKay knew things would have to get better in 1977. The improvement began with the talent source McKay knew best—the University of Southern California.

Offense: Anthony Davis, a USC tailback, bought up his contract with Toronto of the Canadian Football League last fall to rejoin McKay. Then McKay made Ricky Bell the number one selection in the NFL draft. With Davis at tailback and Bell at fullback, the Buccaneers figure to put some points on the board. The main question mark is at quarterback, where the Buccaneers have five candidates. Tampa Bay waived last year's starter, Steve Spurrier, obtained Gary Huff from Chicago, and plan to take a close look at Huff, Parnell Dickinson, Scott Gardner, David Jaynes, and rookie Randy Hedberg of Minot State. Dickinson played well in spots last year before he injured a knee (one of 12 knee injuries on the team) and was lost for the season. The offensive line had so many injuries that only once during the whole season did Tampa Bay start the same people in two consecutive games. Two veterans (11-year tackle Milt Current and 10-year guard Howard Fest) played with rookies next to them for the most part—Steve Young, Charles Little, and Steve Wilson all started at times. The center was a promising four-year pro, Dan Ryczek, who logged more playing time than he had in three previous seasons with Washington. Tight end Bob Moore, who was picked up from Oakland in the expansion draft, caught 26 passes last year. McKay's son, John Jr., and Morris Owens wound up the season as the two top wide receivers. Owens, the former Dolphin, is a speedster; John Jr. has good hands and instincts. The coach also can choose from little (5-9) Freddie Douglas and rookie Larry Mucker of Arizona State, a ninth-round draft choice.

Defense: McKay has an abundance of linebackers, so he plans to use a three-four defense more this year. His three-man front has some solid talent . . . if it can stay healthy. Council Rudolph played free of injury last year, but Dave Pear and Lee Roy Selmon suffered injuries last year that kept them out of games. Pat Toomay, a seven-year pro who has been with Dallas and Buffalo, is a top reserve, along with rookie Charles Hannah of Alabama. At linebacker, it's not inconceivable that McKay could start three former Trojans. Richard Wood, the two-time All-America from USC, is secure as one inside linebacker. Former USC star Jimmy Gunn will battle four-year pro Jim Peterson at one outside post. Second-round draft pick Dave Lewis of USC could start anywhere, according to McKay. Calvin Peterson finished 1976 at one linebacker position, and McKay will switch Dewey, Lee Roy Selmon's brother, to the position, too. McKay is pleased with the work done by his young, aggressive defensive secondary; the Buccaneers finished a respectable seventh in the AFC pass defense rankings. The starting cornerbacks, Mike Washington and Danny Reece, finished on the injured reserve list with knee problems, but both are back. Mark Cotney, who led the team with three interceptions, and Ken Stone, who had two, man the safety spots. Tampa Bay had a better defense than Seattle, the other expansion team, even though McKay went into the 1976 allocation draft saying he wanted to get the best offensive players available. The Buccaneers gave up a respectable 160 yards per game passing, but the defensive line and linebackers permitted 5.1 yards per rush. The new defensive system may help matters and reduce that figure.

Special Teams: Davis and Isaac Hagins will return both punts and kickoffs this year. Davis stunned Notre Dame two years in a row with long returns for scores while he was at USC. Dave Green handled punts and placekicking last year, and McKay is looking for improvement. It could come from Derek Smethurst of Durban, South Africa, a soccer player who plays for the Tampa Bay Rowdies.

1977: With Davis and Bell, the Buccaneers could be one of the most improved teams in the NFL.

1976 SCORES	T.B.	Opp.
Sept. 12 at Houston	0	20
Sept. 19 SAN DIEGO	0	23
Sept. 26 BUFFALO	9	14
Oct. 3 at Baltimore	17	42
Oct. 10 at Cincinnati	0	21
Oct. 17 SEATTLE	10	13
Oct. 24 MIAMI	20	23
Oct. 31 KANSAS CITY	19	28
Nov. 7 at Denver	13	48
Nov. 14 at New York Jets	0	34
Nov. 21 CLEVELAND	7	24
Nov. 28 at Oakland	16	49
Dec. 5 at Pittsburgh	0	42
Dec. 12 NEW ENGLAND	14	31
Won 0 Lost 14	125	415

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	Att.	Yards	Avg.	Long	TD
Louis Carter	171	521	3.0	26	1
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD**	**Int.**
Steve Spurrier	311	156	1,628	50.2	7	12
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Morris Owens	30	390	13.0	27t	6
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**	**Pts.**
Morris Owens	6	0	0	36
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Mark Cotney	3	25	8.3	25	0

TOP DRAFT CHOICES

1. Ricky Bell	RB	USC
2. Dave Lewis	LB	USC
3. Charles Hannah	DE	Alabama
4. Choice to Cincinnati		
5. Choice to Miami		

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense		Defense	
89 John McKay	WR	78 Council Rudolph	LE
71 Steve Young	LT	76 Dave Pear	MG
72 Howard Fest	LG	63 Lee Roy Selmon	RE
51 Dan Ryczek	C	58 Calvin Peterson	LLB
79 Steve Wilson	RG	53 Larry Ball	MLB
74 Mike Current	RT	54 Richard Wood	MLB
86 Bob Moore	TE	57 Jim Peterson	RLB
85 Morris Owens	WR	40 Mike Washington	LCB
19 Gary Huff	QB	46 Danny Reece	RCB
32 Louis Carter	RB	33 Mark Cotney	LS
43 Ed Williams	RB	28 Ken Stone	RS
4 Dave Green	K	4 Dave Green	P

Washington Redskins
NFC Eastern Division 10-4
Coach: George Allen

Redskins Resilient; Who Would Dare Call Them Fossils?

Jean Fugett stands 6 feet 4, weighs 230.

Overview: When Washington finished 1975 with an 8-6 record and failed to make the playoffs for the first time in George Allen's five years as coach, his critics had a good laugh and said Allen's philosophy of sticking with proven players, regardless of age, finally had backfired. Allen had the last laugh in 1976, when Washington used most of the same players—all of them a bit older and wiser—to post a 10-4 record and make the playoffs again.

Offense: Allen feels his interior offensive line this season will be the best he's had in Washington. From left to right they are Tim Stokes, Ron Saul, Len Hauss, Terry Hermeling, and George Starke. Stokes, Hauss, and Starke started every game last year. Saul was injured briefly, but his replacement, Dan Nugent, was a quality player. Both Saul and Nugent will be challenged by Paul Laaveg, the starter at the position from 1972–74 until neck and knee injuries sidelined him for two seasons. Amazing Bill Kilmer will be 38 by the close of his sixteenth training camp; he's Allen's quarterback. Kilmer suffered a shoulder injury that kept him out of five games last year, yet still passed for 1,252 yards to give him a career total of 18,992. Joe Theismann, who passed for 1,036 yards in 1976, could see a lot of action if Kilmer is slowed. Mike Thomas, now in his third season, ran for 1,101 yards in 1976 and was the team's second-leading pass receiver with 28 catches. Thomas scored nine touchdowns, five on runs and four on pass receptions. Former Jet John Riggins and former Cowboy Calvin Hill were the team's second- and third-ranking rushers. Hill played much of the season with a hamstring injury, but he's healthy this year. Another running back, Larry Brown, caught 17 passes and was used in third down situations. Charley Taylor, the NFL's all-time leading pass receiver, is 34 but he's making what could be a miraculous return after sitting out 1976 with a shoulder injury. Frank Grant's continued development as a receiver with 50 catches gives him one wide receiver spot. Roy Jefferson, the team's third-leading receiver last season, has retired. The Redskins also will look at Larry Jones, who missed 1976 with an ankle injury, and Bryan Fryer, the only rookie to make the team last year. Jean Fugett was a steady tight end, ahead of the superb but aging Jerry Smith, 33. Fugett caught 27 passes, six for touchdowns, last year.

Defense: The strongest aspect of the Washington defense is its secondary. Washington opponents completed just 41.1 percent of their passes in 1976, the lowest figure in the NFL. The Redskins permitted just 11 touchdown passes. Ken Houston and Jake Scott, the safeties, are awesome hitters. Each intercepted four passes. Joe Lavender, obtained from Philadelphia, led the team with eight interceptions from his cornerback spot. The other cornerback is Pat Fischer, a 17-year veteran and perennial Pro Bowler. The average age of the 11 defenders is 32, and the oldest is one of the best: left end Ron McDole, 38. Bill Brundige, 28, at left tackle, is a standout pass rusher, and his backup, Dave Butz, 27, is good against the run. Tackle Diron Talbert, 33, and end Dennis Johnson, 26, make the right side a strong one. Fourth-round draft pick Duncan McColl will challenge the ends, but probably will end up a reserve. At right linebacker, 13-year veteran Chris Hanburger is a mighty force. Left linebacker Brad Dusek appears set, but middle linebacker Harold McLinton may be challenged by Greg Hartle, a starter last year at St. Louis.

Special Teams: Led by Bob Brunet and Rusty Tillman, Allen's special teams limited opponents to an average of 16.2 yards a kickoff return, second best in NFL history to the 16.0 by the 1940 Chicago Bears. Eddie Brown's NFC-leading 13.5-yard punt return average, and 24.6 on kickoffs, made this another strong point. And continuing the Allen tradition of strong special teams, punter Mike Bragg averaged 38.9 yards; only 44 of his 90 punts were returned. Mark Moseley led the NFC with 97 points, and 22 field goals (in 34 attempts).

1977: Allen has proven that age is relative. With that theory debunked, the Redskins are contenders once again.

1976 SCORES	Wash.	Opp.
Sept. 12 NEW YORK GIANTS	19	17
Sept. 19 SEATTLE	31	7
Sept. 27 at Philadelphia (Monday)	20	17
Oct. 3 at Chicago	7	33
Oct. 10 KANSAS CITY	30	33
Oct. 17 DETROIT	20	7
Oct. 25 ST. LOUIS (Monday)	20	10
Oct. 31 DALLAS	7	20
Nov. 7 at San Francisco	24	21
Nov. 14 at New York Giants	9	12
Nov. 21 at St. Louis	16	10
Nov. 28 PHILADELPHIA	24	0
Dec. 5 at New York Jets	37	16
Dec. 12 at Dallas	27	14
Won 10 Lost 4	**291**	**217**

Divisional Playoff
Dec. 18 at Minnesota 20 35

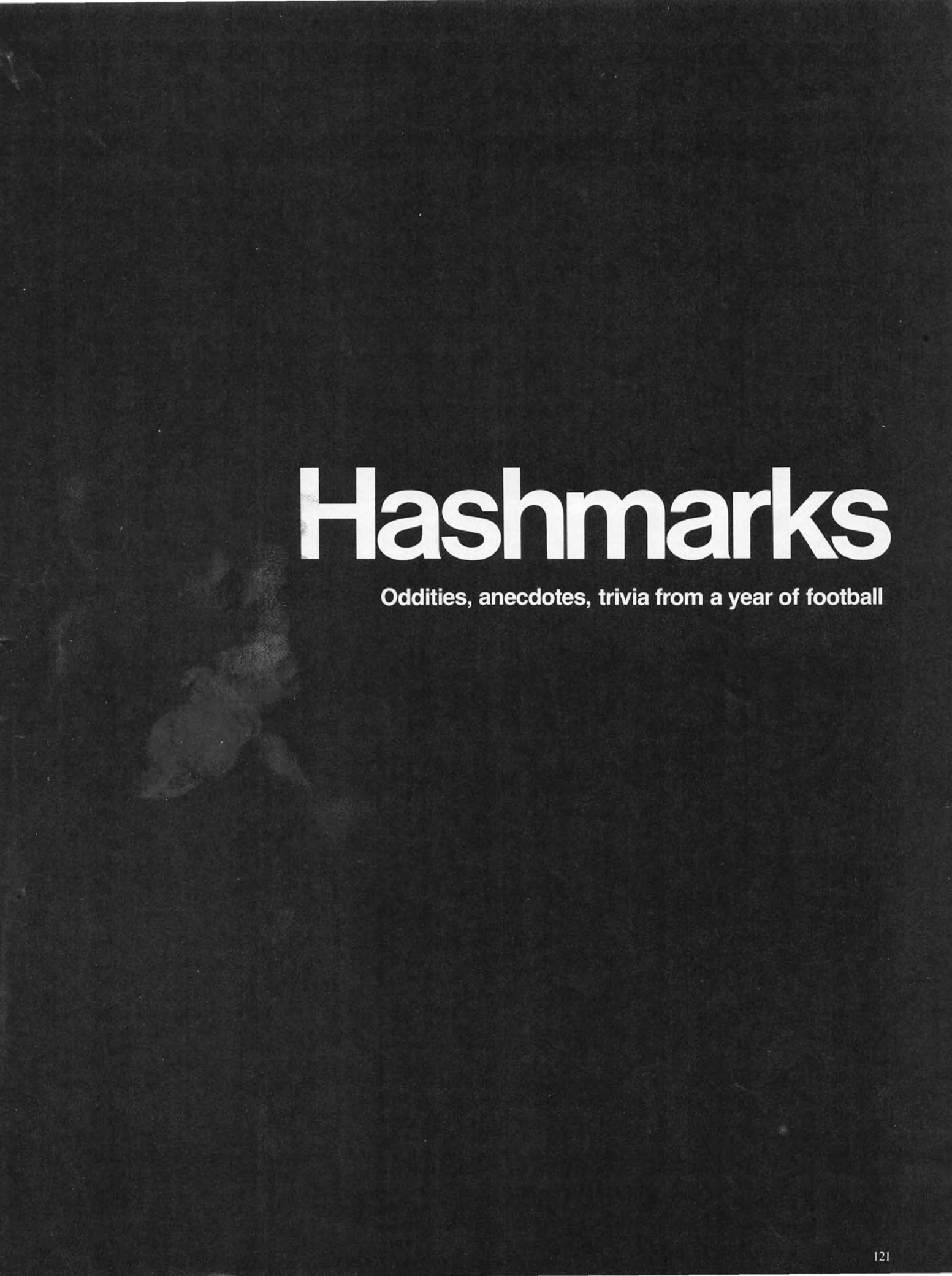
INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing	Att.	Yards	Avg.	Long	TD
Mike Thomas	254	1,101	4.3	28	5
Passing	**Att.**	**Comp.**	**Yards**	**Pct.**	**TD**	**Int.**
Billy Kilmer	206	108	1,252	52.4	12	10
Receiving	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Frank Grant	50	818	16.4	53t	5
Scoring	**TD**	**FG**	**PAT**	**Pts.**
Mark Moseley	0	22-34	31-32	97
Interceptions	**No.**	**Yards**	**Avg.**	**Long**	**TD**
Joe Lavender	8	77	9.6	28	0

TOP DRAFT CHOICES
1. Choice to St. Louis
2. Choice to Los Angeles through San Diego
3. Choice to San Diego
4. Duncan McColl DE Stanford
   from Miami
   Choice to Kansas City
5. Choice to Los Angeles

STARTING LINEUPS

Offense		Defense	
42 Charley Taylor	WR	79 Ron McDole	LE
76 Tim Stokes	LT	77 Bill Brundige	LT
64 Ron Saul	LG	72 Diron Talbert	RT
56 Len Hauss	C	61 Dennis Johnson	RE
75 Terry Hermeling	RG	59 Brad Dusek	LLB
74 George Starke	RT	53 Harold McLinton	MLB
84 Jean Fugett	TE	55 Chris Hanburger	RLB
46 Frank Grant	WR	37 Pat Fischer	LCB
17 Billy Kilmer	QB	20 Joe Lavender	RCB
44 John Riggins	RB	27 Ken Houston	LS
22 Mike Thomas	RB	13 Jake Scott	RS
3 Mark Moseley	K	4 Mike Bragg	P



Hashmarks

Oddities, anecdotes, trivia from a year of football

The Professionally Certified All-America Team

One All-America team is determined each year by the persons whose livelihoods are based on the accuracy of their selections. This is the team that develops from the NFL draft. Here are the 24 persons drafted first at their positions in 1977.

OFFENSE

Pos.	Name	College	Draft No.	Team
WR	Stanley Morgan	Tennessee	25	New England
T	Marvin Powell	USC	4	N.Y. Jets
G	Steve August	Tulsa	14	Seattle
C	Bob Rush	Memphis State	24	San Diego
G	Steve Schindler	Boston College	18	Denver
T	Warren Bryant	Kentucky	5	Atlanta
TE	Mike Cobb	Michigan State	22	Cincinnati
WR	Randy Burke	Kentucky	26	Baltimore
QB	Steve Pisarkiewicz	Missouri	19	St. Louis
RB	Ricky Bell	USC	1	Tampa Bay
RB	Tony Dorsett	Pittsburgh	2	Dallas
K	Alan Leavitt	Georgia	90	Atlanta

DEFENSE

Pos.	Name	College	Draft No.	Team
DE	Eddie Edwards	Miami	3	Cincinnati
DT	Wilson Whitley	Houston	8	Cincinnati
DT	A.J. Duhe	Louisiana State	13	Miami
DE	Gary Jeter	USC	5	N.Y. Giants
LB	Robert Jackson	Texas A&M	17	Cleveland
LB	Robin Cole	New Mexico	21	Pittsburgh
LB	Bob Brudzinski	Ohio State	23	Los Angeles
DB	Gary Green	Baylor	10	Kansas City
DB	Raymond Clayborn	Texas	16	New England
DB	Nolan Cromwell	Kansas	31	Los Angeles
DB	Mike Davis	Colorado	35	Oakland
P	Tom Skladany	Ohio State	46	Cleveland

End of an Era

"The College All-Star football game, a midsummer fixture on Chicago's lakefront since 1934, has been discontinued."

With those words, an NFL tradition was given its obituary by the newspaper that started the event, the Chicago *Tribune*.

The game, a benefit for Tribune Charities, matched collegians against the NFL champions of the previous season. It was held annually from 1934 to 1976 with the exception of 1974, when there was a player strike.

The Pittsburgh Steelers won the last game 24-0. It was called with 1:22 left in the third quarter. A thunderstorm flooded the field and NFL commissioner Pete Rozelle suspended play.

Pro teams won the game 31 times, the collegians won 10 times, and there was one tie.

New Coaches

Atlanta—Leeman Bennett, receivers coach with Los Angeles from 1973–76, succeeds Pat Peppler, who served as interim coach after Marion Campbell was fired last October.

Leeman Bennett, Atlanta Falcons.

Buffalo—Jim Ringo, former all-pro center with Green Bay, took over when Lou Saban resigned shortly before game six of the 1976 season. Ringo, who had been Buffalo's offensive line coach, was retained for 1977.

Denver—Robert (Red) Miller, offensive line coach with New England from 1973–76, was named Denver's head coach following John Ralston's resignation.

Robert (Red) Miller, Denver Broncos.

Detroit—Tommy Hudspeth, formerly Detroits' coordinator of personnel and scouting, replaced Rick Forzano as interim head coach after the fourth game of 1976, and will remain at the Lions' helm in 1977.

New York Giants—John McVay was hired as interim coach after Bill Arnsparger's release in late October, and will continue at the post in 1977. McVay was a Giants' assistant and former head coach of the Memphis Southmen of the World Football League.

New York Jets—Walt Michaels, former all-pro linebacker with Cleveland in the 1950s and 1960s and a Jets' assistant in 1963–72 and again last year, replaced Lou Holtz.

Quick Hands, Good Penetration

When public health officials in St. Louis needed help promoting community participation in the national swine flu inoculation program, they knew where to go. The entire front office staff of the St. Louis Cardinals, as well as most of the players, lined up for the vaccine. Head coach Don Coryell receives his shot from the team physician, Dr. Bernard Garfinkel.

Rules Changes

At their April meeting, National Football League presidents enacted four changes in playing rules for the 1977 season.

To allow a receiver to move downfield in a less obstructed manner, a defender will be allowed to contact an eligible receiver *either* in the zone three yards beyond the line of scrimmage *or* beyond this zone. Contact in both areas will be ruled a defensive holding violation.

A team that is not on the field in ample time (15 minutes) prior to the scheduled kickoff for either half will be penalized by a loss of the coin toss option as well as the standard 15-yard delay of game assessment.

A team will be penalized 15 yards if an official judges that a player *deliberately* kicks at any ball other than a punt, dropkick, or placekick.

The fourth change eliminates the "legal clip zone" for a player aligned in the "crackback" position. That is, an offensive player (usually a wide receiver) who lines up more than two yards outside the offensive tackle will no longer be permitted to clip an opponent within the area three yards on either side of the line of scrimmage. An illegal crackback block will carry a penalty of 15 yards.

At their June meeting, NFL owners were expected to consider three other rules changes: (1) elimination of the head slap, making it illegal for a defensive player to contact an opponent above the shoulders; (2) making it illegal for a pass blocker to contact an opponent above the shoulders by using a jabbing or pumping action of the hands; (3) strengthening the penalty—to include suspension beyond disqualification—when a player deliberately attempts to injure or physically intimidate an opponent.

Sleepers of 1976

Eddie Brown (Washington) cost Washington the $100 waiver price when he was released by Cleveland. He played "nickel back" (fifth defensive back) on occasion and distinguished himself as the NFL's leading punt returner (and second best in league history) with a total of 646 yards in 1976.

Cleveland Elam (San Francisco), a fourth-round draft choice in 1975, was moved from defensive end to tackle last year and started all 14 games for San Francisco. He made 14 of the "Gold Rush's" league-high 65 quarterback sacks and earned a spot on the NFC Pro Bowl roster.

Mike Esposito (Atlanta), a seventh-round draft choice in 1975, was waived at the end of 1976 training camp but was recalled after four games of the regular season and ended the year as the club's third leading ground gainer.

Clark Gaines (New York Jets), a rookie free agent from Wake Forest, compiled a total of 37 yards rushing in New York's first six games. When Ed Marinaro was injured, Gaines took over at running back and finished the season with team-high ground totals of 724 yards and three touchdowns. Gaines also led the club in pass receiving with 41 catches for 400 yards, and in the final game became the first back in Jet history to put together four 100-yard games in one season.

Mike Hogan, Philadelphia Eagles.

Steve Grogan (New England) stepped in at quarterback when Jim Plunkett was traded to San Francisco. Grogan's 1,903 yards passing and 12 rushing touchdowns (an NFL record for quarterbacks) helped the Patriots to an 11-3 record.

Willie Hall (Oakland) bounced from New Orleans to Oakland to a salesman's job at a used car lot in 1975. He returned to the Raiders in 1976 and won a job as one of the middle linebackers in Oakland's 3-4 defense.

Mike Hogan (Philadelphia), a ninth-round draft choice, was injured for the middle six games of the season, but was the Eagles' leading rusher with 561 yards and a 4.6 average.

Jimmy Robinson, New York Giants.

Dan Jilek (Buffalo), a linebacker who was drafted fourth in 1976, made 99 tackles, 60 of them unassisted, second best among Buffalo defenders. Jilek started all 14 regular season games at the right outside position.

Butch Johnson (Dallas), a third-round draft pick from California–Riverside, set club records with 45 punt returns for 489 yards. Johnson was used at wide receiver late in the season, and two of his five receptions were for touchdowns.

Rod Perry (Los Angeles) was drafted in the fourth round in 1975 and sat out part of his rookie season with a knee injury. In 1976, Perry took over at left corner and complemented Monte Jackson's 10 interceptions with 8 of his own.

Jimmy Robinson (New York Giants), a 5-foot 9-inch free agent from Georgia Tech, seemed an unlikely survivor in training camp but eventually won a starting position at wide receiver. In addition to catching 18 passes for 249 yards (including the first touchdown by a Giant at new Giants Stadium), Robinson was the club's leading kickoff and punt return specialist.

Sherman Smith (Seattle), who had played quarterback at Miami of Ohio and was drafted as a wide receiver in the second round, turned out to be Seattle's leading all-purpose ground gainer. Smith picked up a total of 1,014 yards, including 536 in rushing, 384 in receptions, and 93 in returns.

Sherman Smith, Seattle Seahawks.

Progress Report: First-Round Choices of 1976

Lee Roy Selmon, Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Lawrence Gaines, Detroit Lions.

1. Lee Roy Selmon	DE	Tampa Bay (Oklahoma)	Started six games, injured knee mid-season.
2. Steve Niehaus	DT	Seattle (Notre Dame)	Started 14 games, led team with nine sacks.
3. Chuck Muncie	RB	New Orleans (California)	Rushed for 652 yards despite various injuries.
4. Joe Washington	RB	San Diego (Oklahoma)	Injured knee in pre-season.
5. Mike Haynes	DB	New England (Arizona State)	Led AFC in punt returns, second in AFC interceptions.
6. Richard Todd	QB	New York Jets (Alabama)	Backed up Joe Namath, completed 65 of 162 passes.
7. Mike Pruitt	RB	Cleveland (Purdue)	Started first three games, backed up Cleo Miller.
8. Dennis Lick	T	Chicago (Wisconsin)	Started eight games.
9. Bubba Bean	RB	Atlanta (Texas A&M)	Started seven games.
10. James Hunter	DB	Detroit (Grambling)	Led team with seven interceptions.
11. Billy Brooks	WR	Cincinnati (Oklahoma)	Backed up Isaac Curtis.
12. Pete Brock	C	New England (Colorado)	Backed up Bill Lenkaitis.
13. Troy Archer	DE	New York Giants (Colorado)	Started last six games.
14. Rod Walters	G	Kansas City (Iowa)	Backed up Tom Condon.
15. Tom Glassic	G	Denver (Virginia)	Started 14 games.
16. Lawrence Gaines	RB	Detroit (Grambling)	Rushed for 659 yards and four touchdowns.
17. Larry Gordon	LB	Miami (Arizona State)	Started 14 games.
18. Kim Bokamper	LB	Miami (San Jose State)	Injured knee in pre-season.
19. Mario Clark	DB	Buffalo (Oregon)	Started 14 games.
20. Ken Novak	DT	Baltimore (Purdue)	Backed up Mike Barnes and Joe Ehrmann.
21. Tim Fox	DB	New England (Ohio State)	Started 13 games.
22. Mike Dawson	DT	St. Louis (Arizona)	Started last nine games.
23. Mark Koncar	T	Green Bay (Colorado)	Started 14 games.
24. Archie Griffin	RB	Cincinnati (Ohio State)	Rushed for 625 yards and a 4.5 average.
25. James White	DT	Minnesota (Oklahoma State)	Backed up Alan Page and Doug Sutherland.
26. Kevin McLain	LB	Los Angeles (Colorado State)	Started one game, backed up Jim Youngblood and Rick Kay.
27. Aaron Kyle	DB	Dallas (Wyoming)	Backed up Benny Barnes.
28. Bennie Cunningham	TE	Pittsburgh (Clemson)	Backed up Larry Brown and Randy Grossman.

Hall of Fame

Inducted July 30, 1977 at Canton, Ohio:

Frank Gifford, running back, defensive back, wide receiver, kicker, New York Giants, 1952–1960, 1962–64.

Forrest Gregg, tackle, Green Bay Packers, 1956–1971.

Gale Sayers, running back, Chicago Bears, 1965–1972.

Bart Starr, quarterback, Green Bay Packers, 1956–1971.

Bill Willis, defensive middle guard, offensive guard, Cleveland Browns, 1946–1953.

Gale Sayers, Chicago Bears.

Super Depressed

Descriptions and analyses of Super Bowl XI have been filed *ad infinitum*. But this view of Minnesota safety Autry Beamon says it clearly: Vikings 14, Raiders 32.

Just Passing Through

Welcome to the jet age! The Kansas City airport was closed and the Denver Broncos were diverted to Topeka. Linebacker Tom Jackson and the Broncos had to bus to Kansas City.

All-Pro Team for 1976

Selected by the Professional Football Writers of America

Clifford Branch, Oakland Raiders.

Offense

Clifford Branch, Oakland	WR
Drew Pearson, Dallas	WR
Dave Casper, Oakland	TE
Dan Dierdorf, St. Louis	T
Ron Yary, Minnesota	T
Joe DeLamielleure, Buffalo	G
John Hannah, New England	G
Jim Langer, Miami	C
Bert Jones, Baltimore	QB
O.J. Simpson, Buffalo	RB
Walter Payton, Chicago	RB
Jim Bakken, St. Louis	K

Robert Brazile, Houston Oilers.

Defense

Jack Youngblood, Los Angeles	DE
Tommy Hart, San Francisco	DE
Wally Chambers, Chicago	DT
Jerry Sherk, Cleveland	DT
Jack Lambert, Pittsburgh	MLB
Jack Ham, Pittsburgh	LB
Robert Brazile, Houston	LB
Monte Jackson, Los Angeles	CB
Roger Wehrli, St. Louis	CB
Ken Houston, Washington	S
Cliff Harris, Dallas	S
Ray Guy, Oakland	P

Late-Bloomers of 1976

John Banaszak (Pittsburgh) was a 25-year-old rookie in 1975, having spent three years in the marines before attending Eastern Michigan. When Dwight White was injured in mid-1976, Banaszak filled in well at defensive end, starting five games.

Louis Carter (Tampa Bay) didn't become a starter until the sixth week of the 1976 season. He finished as the Bucs' leading rusher with 521 yards. Prior to last season, Carter had carried the ball only 11 times with Oakland in 1975.

Henry Childs (New Orleans) was signed as a free agent in 1974. The tight end caught no passes in his first year and 10 in 1975. In 1976, he won the starting job and caught 26 for 349 yards and three touchdowns.

Dan Fouts (San Diego) was the eighth-ranked passer in the AFC in his fourth season. He attained personal milestones of 208 completions, 2,535 yards, a 57.9 passing percentage, and 14 touchdowns.

Louis Carter, Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Ron Howard (Seattle) came to Seattle from Dallas in the expansion draft. After two years and no receptions with the Cowboys, he caught 37 passes.

Mike Kadish (Buffalo) was Miami's first draft pick in 1972 and spent his rookie year on the Dolphins' taxi squad. After coming to Buffalo in a 1975 trade, Kadish played in 12 games at defensive tackle and showed steady improvement. In 1976 he became a starter and was the Bills' most consistent defensive lineman, leading the team in quarterback sacks.

John Matuszak (Oakland) joined the club after three years of traveling around the league. Released by Washington and signed by Oakland as a free agent, Matuszak established himself as the starting left end in the Super Bowl champions' 3-4 defensive alignment.

Ed Newman (Miami) underwent two operations in the winter of 1975 for a malignant tumor in his throat. In 1976, after playing behind the all-pro guard tandem of Larry Little and Bob Kuechenberg for three years, Newman started four games on the right side (Little's) and four on the left (Kuechenberg's). Chances are excellent that Newman's victory over cancer will result in a permanent job at right guard, with Little shifting to the right tackle spot.

Ed Newman, Miami Dolphins.

Jim Osborne (Chicago), in his fifth year as a pro, became Chicago's defensive captain in 1976. Osborne started regularly at left tackle, making 15 sacks and 7 other tackles behind the line of scrimmage.

Ed O'Neil (Detroit) was a first-round draft pick in 1974 but had problems breaking in. He started six games in 1975, then solidified his role as an outside and occasional middle linebacker with 72 tackles in 1976.

Rich Saul (Los Angeles), who had waited six years before becoming the team's starting center in 1975, earned a berth on the NFC Pro Bowl roster, and was voted Los Angeles's top offensive lineman for 1976.

Norris Weese (Denver) took over for Steve Ramsey in the final two games of 1976. Weese engineered a 28-14 victory over Chicago in the final game, contributing 120 yards to the Broncos' ground game on 12 carries. Weese also was Denver's punter for the last half of the season, replacing injured Billy Van Heusen.

Rich Saul, Los Angeles Rams.

Comebacks in 1976

Otis Armstrong (Denver) gained 1,008 yards rushing after sitting out most of the 1975 season with a torn hamstring. His performance earned him a spot on the AFC Pro Bowl squad and marked a return to form for the 1974 NFL rushing titlist.

Coy Bacon (Cincinnati), the journeyman defensive end, came to Cincinnati from San Diego in a trade for wide receiver Charlie Joiner. Bacon was credited with 26 quarterback sacks.

Pete Barnes (New England) was waived by expansion Tampa Bay and signed by New England as a free agent. When injuries struck the linebacking corps, Barnes stepped in, started seven games, and led NFL linebackers in sacks with eight.

Larry Brooks (Los Angeles) suffered a knee injury in early November of 1975, rehabilitated himself in the off-season, and returned to earn a Pro Bowl berth in 1976. Brooks led Los Angeles in quarterback sacks last year with 13 solo tackles and 3 assists.

Ross Brupbacher, Chicago Bears.

Ross Brupbacher (Chicago) returned from three years of law school wtih a degree and a knack for theft. He led NFL linebackers with seven interceptions.

Thom Darden (Cleveland) missed all of 1975 due to knee surgery, but last year started every game at free safety and led the club in interceptions with seven.

Efren Herrera (Dallas) missed all of the 1975 season with a knee injury but came back in 1976 to beat out Toni Fritsch for the Dallas placekicking job. Herrera's 88 points placed him sixth in NFL scoring, and his 100 percent extra point effectiveness was matched by only one other player (Skip Butler of Houston).

Don Herrmann (New Orleans) caught only three passes for 47 yards in 1975. Last season, he led New Orleans wide receivers with 34 catches and 535 yards, a 15.7 average.

Efren Herrera, Dallas Cowboys.

Al Johnson (Houston) missed the 1975 season with a leg injury but became Houston's "headhunter" on all special teams and saw occasional duty as a running back and defensive back.

Greg Landry (Detroit) completed 58 percent of his passes for 2,191 yards, more than his total passing yardage for the previous three years. Landry also threw for 17 touchdowns in leading Detroit's most productive pass offense in nine years.

Ahmad Rashad (Minnesota) had injured his knee in Buffalo and was signed by Seattle. The knee was still questionable when Minnesota acquired him in a trade, but he finished the season with 53 catches, highest in Vikings' history for a wide receiver.

Dave Rowe (Oakland) had played with four teams before joining Oakland in 1975. He came to camp in 1976 to compete against an established defensive line and two highly regarded draftees, and won the middle guard spot in the Raiders' 3-4 alignment. Rowe capped an outstanding season with two key pass deflections in Super Bowl XI.

Dave Rowe, Oakland Raiders.

Retirements

Selecting all-star teams can be tricky business. But at the end of 1976, an all-star team of high quality was assembled—by default, if you will. The roster of last year's NFL retirees includes Ed Budde, 14-year guard, Kansas City; Nick Buoniconti, 14-year linebacker, Miami; Jimmy Johnson, 16-year cornerback, San Francisco; Lee Roy Jordan, 14-year linebacker, Dallas; Earl Morrall, 21-year quarterback, Miami; Tommy Nobis, 11-year linebacker, Atlanta; Merlin Olsen, 15-year defensive tackle, Los Angeles; Andy Russell, 12-year linebacker, Pittsburgh; Norm Snead, 16-year quarterback, New York Giants; and Larry Stallings, 14-year linebacker, St. Louis.

Nick Buoniconti, Miami Dolphins.

Jimmy Johnson, San Francisco 49ers.

Merlin Olsen, Los Angeles Rams.

Pro Bowl Rosters

AFC		NFC	
Ken Anderson, Cincinnati	QB	Jim Bakken, St. Louis	K
Otis Armstrong, Denver	RB	Tom Banks, St. Louis	C
Coy Bacon, Cincinnati	DE	Lem Barney, Detroit	CB
Mel Blount, Pittsburgh	CB	Bill Bergey, Philadelphia	MLB
Clifford Branch, Oakland	WR	Larry Brooks, Los Angeles	DT
Robert Brazile, Houston	LB	Eddie Brown, Washington	KR
Roger Carr, Baltimore	WR	Wally Chambers, Chicago	DT
Tom Casanova, Cincinnati	S	Dan Dierdorf, St. Louis	T
Dave Casper, Oakland	TE	Conrad Dobler, St. Louis	G
Curley Culp, Houston	DT	Billy Joe DuPree, Dallas	TE
Isaac Curtis, Cincinnati	WR	Cleveland Elam, San Francisco	DT
Joe DeLamielleure, Buffalo	G	Mel Gray, St. Louis	WR
John Dutton, Baltimore	DE	Cliff Harris, Dallas	S
Glen Edwards, Pittsburgh	S	Jim Hart, St. Louis	QB
Russ Francis, New England	TE	Tommy Hart, San Francisco	DE
Leon Gray, New England	T	Ken Houston, Washington	S
Joe Greene, Pittsburgh	DT	Monte Jackson, Los Angeles	CB
L.C. Greenwood, Pittsburgh	DE	John James, Atlanta	P
Ray Guy, Oakland	P	Ron Jessie, Los Angeles	WR
Jack Ham, Pittsburgh	LB	Harvey Martin, Dallas	DE
John Hannah, New England	G	Lawrence McCutcheon, Los Angeles	RB
Charlie Joiner, San Diego	WR	Blaine Nye, Dallas	G
Bert Jones, Baltimore	QB	Walter Payton, Chicago	RB
George Kunz, Baltimore	T	Drew Pearson, Dallas	WR
Jack Lambert, Pittsburgh	MLB	Isiah Robertson, Los Angeles	LB
Jim Langer, Miami	C	Charlie Sanders, Detroit	TE
Jim LeClair, Cincinnati	MLB	Rich Saul, Los Angeles	C
Toni Linhart, Baltimore	K	Jeff Siemon, Minnesota	MLB
Lydell Mitchell, Baltimore	RB	Roger Staubach, Dallas	QB
Lemar Parrish, Cincinnati	CB	Mike Thomas, Washington	RB
Greg Pruitt, Cleveland	RB	Brad Van Pelt, New York Giants	LB
Jack Rudnay, Kansas City	C	Dave Washington, San Francisco	LB
Art Shell, Oakland	T	Charlie Waters, Dallas	S
Jerry Sherk, Cleveland	DT	Roger Wehrli, St. Louis	CB
O.J. Simpson, Buffalo	RB	Ed White, Minnesota	WR
J.T. Thomas, Pittsburgh	CB	Delvin Williams, San Francisco	RB
Rick Upchurch, Denver	KR	Rayfield Wright, Dallas	T
Gene Upshaw, Oakland	G	Ron Yary, Minnesota	T
Phil Villapiano, Oakland	LB	Jack Youngblood, Los Angeles	DE
Mike Wagner, Pittsburgh	S		

A Long, Long Way
Cynthia Steinhouwer of Honolulu took a giant step for womankind, to the area Ford Punt, Pass, and Kick competition in S.F.

Make that "Hollywood Joe"
Or maybe "Sunset Boulevard Joe." How about "Wilshire Joe?" But by all means, scratch "Broadway Joe." He's a Ram now.

Last Words

After Oakland had defeated Pittsburgh for the 1976 AFC championship, Ken Stabler was asked about the absence, due to injuries, of Steelers running backs Franco Harris and Rocky Bleier. "In previous years, the same thing has happened to us," said Stabler. "But you go with what you've got. You dance with the gal you brought."

At the outset of the 1976 season, San Diego coach Tommy Prothro welcomed the chance to combine the talents of Don Woods, Rickey Young, and Joe Washington. "We've played Woods at fullback in the past," said Prothro. "When the halfback was going to get the ball, he was halfback. When the fullback was going to get the ball, he was fullback."

During Oakland's 12-7 opening day victory over Miami at Berkeley four years ago, Raiders defensive back Willie Brown was faced with a unique type of double coverage. "I was covering Paul Warfield and all of a sudden there was this bee in my pants stinging me," Brown remembers. "I was out there in front of 80,000 people trying to get a bee out of my pants and cover one of the best wide receivers in football at the same time. Actually, the bee gave me a tougher time than Warfield did. He didn't catch a pass. I got stung, but I didn't get burned."

Miami Dolphins' placekicker Garo Yepremian paid his emotional dues during his tenure with Detroit. "I only weighed 148 pounds then," says Garo. "Before I'd go in, one or another of the Lions would grab me by the shirt and say, 'Listen, you little runt. You'd better not miss.' "

After an early season game with San Diego drew only 39,558 a Tampa Bay Buccaneers' official was addressing a group of senior citizens. "Bucs' fans should be patient," he said. "It might be two to three years before the club becomes competitive." From the back of the room a voice shouted, "We don't have that long!"

Philadelphia Eagles linebacker Bill Bergey rejoiced when, after an 0-6 preseason record and an opening day loss, the Eagles defeated the New York Giants 20-7. "Every week, when I get home," said Bergey, "my son, Jason, asks, 'Who beat you today, Dad?' What a great feeling to be able to tell the little twerp we won."

Baltimore punter David Lee had played in 125 consecutive games, but late in a 37-21 win over San Diego, the Colts had not been forced to punt. To keep his string alive, Lee was sent in to play defense. Said Lee: "The Chargers were so surprised when they saw me, they fumbled the snap."

Cincinnati placekicker Chris Bahr reckons Tom Dempsey's NFL field goal record of 63 yards may last forever. Aside from the rule that gives the defense the ball at the line of scrimmage if the kick is missed, Bahr contends: "Even if all the conditions are perfect, it's almost impossible. You're trying to hit an eighteen-foot target from 189 feet away. It's equivalent to Jerry West hitting an eighty-foot basket at the buzzer."

1977 NFL Schedule

All times local

FIRST WEEK

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

1. Baltimore at Seattle ... 1:00
2. Cleveland at Cincinnati ... 1:00
3. Dallas at Minnesota ... (CBS) 3:00
4. Detroit at Chicago ... 1:00
5. Green Bay at New Orleans ... 1:00
6. Kansas City at New England ... 1:00
7. Los Angeles at Atlanta ... 1:00
8. Miami at Buffalo ... 1:00
9. New York Jets at Houston ... 3:00
10. St. Louis at Denver ... 2:00
11. San Diego at Oakland ... 1:00
12. Tampa Bay at Philadelphia ... 1:00
13. Washington at New York Giants ... 1:00

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

14. San Francisco at Pittsburgh ... (ABC) 9:00

SECOND WEEK

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

15. Minnesota at Tampa Bay ... 8:00

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

16. Atlanta at Washington ... 1:00
17. Baltimore at New York Jets ... 1:00
18. Buffalo at Denver ... 2:00
19. Chicago at St. Louis ... 1:00
20. Houston at Green Bay ... 1:00
21. Miami at San Francisco ... 1:00
22. New Orleans at Detroit ... 1:00
23. New York Giants at Dallas ... 1:00
24. Oakland at Pittsburgh ... (NBC) 4:00
25. Philadelphia at Los Angeles ... 1:00
26. San Diego at Kansas City ... 1:00
27. Seattle at Cincinnati ... 1:00

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

28. New England at Cleveland ... (ABC) 9:00

THIRD WEEK

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 2

29. Buffalo at Baltimore ... 2:00
30. Cincinnati at San Diego ... 1:00
31. Denver at Seattle ... 1:00
32. Green Bay at Minnesota ... 1:00
33. Houston at Miami ... 4:00
34. New England at New York Jets ... 1:00
35. New Orleans at Chicago ... 1:00
36. New York Giants at Atlanta ... 1:00
37. Philadelphia at Detroit ... 1:00
38. Pittsburgh at Cleveland ... 1:00
39. St. Louis at Washington ... (CBS) 4:00
40. San Francisco at Los Angeles ... 1:00
41. Tampa Bay at Dallas ... 1:00

MONDAY, OCTOBER 3

42. Oakland at Kansas City ... (ABC) 8:00

FOURTH WEEK

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 9

43. Atlanta at San Francisco ... 1:00
44. Cincinnati vs. Green Bay (Milwaukee) ... 1:00
45. Dallas at St. Louis ... (CBS) 3:00
46. Detroit at Minnesota ... 1:00
47. Kansas City at Denver ... 2:00
48. Miami at Baltimore ... 2:00
49. New York Jets at Buffalo ... 1:00
50. Oakland at Cleveland ... 1:00
51. Philadelphia at New York Giants ... 1:00
52. Pittsburgh at Houston ... 1:00
53. San Diego at New Orleans ... 1:00
54. Seattle at New England ... 1:00
55. Washington at Tampa Bay ... 4:00

MONDAY, OCTOBER 10

56. Los Angeles at Chicago ... (ABC) 8:00

FIFTH WEEK

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 16

57. Atlanta at Buffalo ... 1:00
58. Baltimore at Kansas City ... 12:00
59. Chicago at Minnesota ... 1:00
60. Cleveland at Houston ... 1:00
61. Denver at Oakland ... (NBC) 1:00
62. Green Bay at Detroit ... 1:00
63. New England at San Diego ... 1:00
64. New Orleans at Los Angeles ... 1:00
65. New York Jets at Miami ... 4:00
66. St. Louis at Philadelphia ... 1:00
67. San Francisco at New York Giants ... 1:00
68. Tampa Bay at Seattle ... 1:00
69. Washington at Dallas ... (CBS) 3:00

MONDAY, OCTOBER 17

70. Cincinnati at Pittsburgh ... (ABC) 9:00

SIXTH WEEK

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 23

71. Atlanta at Chicago ... 1:00
72. Baltimore at New England ... (NBC) 4:00
73. Cleveland at Buffalo ... 1:00
74. Dallas at Philadelphia ... 1:00
75. Denver at Cincinnati ... 1:00
76. Detroit at San Francisco ... 1:00
77. Green Bay at Tampa Bay ... 1:00
78. Houston at Pittsburgh ... 1:00
79. Kansas City at San Diego ... 1:00
80. New Orleans at St. Louis ... 1:00
81. New York Giants at Washington ... 1:00
82. Oakland at New York Jets ... 1:00
83. Seattle at Miami ... 1:00

MONDAY, OCTOBER 24

84. Minnesota at Los Angeles ... (ABC) 6:00

SEVENTH WEEK

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 30

85. Buffalo at Seattle ... 1:00
86. Chicago at Green Bay ... 1:00
87. Detroit at Dallas ... 1:00
88. Houston at Cincinnati ... 1:00
89. Kansas City at Cleveland ... 1:00
90. Los Angeles at New Orleans ... 1:00
91. Minnesota at Atlanta ... 1:00
92. New York Jets at New England ... 1:00
93. Oakland at Denver ... 2:00
94. Philadelphia at Washington ... 1:00
95. Pittsburgh at Baltimore ... (NBC) 4:00
96. San Diego at Miami ... 1:00
97. Tampa Bay at San Francisco ... 1:00

MONDAY, OCTOBER 31

98. New York Giants at St. Louis ... (ABC) 8:00

EIGHTH WEEK

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 6

99. Buffalo at New England ... 1:00
100. Chicago at Houston ... 1:00
101. Cincinnati at Cleveland ... 1:00
102. Dallas at New York Giants ... 1:00
103. Green Bay at Kansas City ... 1:00
104. Miami at New York Jets ... 1:00
105. New Orleans at Philadelphia ... 1:00
106. Pittsburgh at Denver ... 2:00
107. St. Louis at Minnesota ... (CBS) 3:00
108. San Diego at Detroit ... 1:00
109. San Francisco at Atlanta ... 1:00
110. Seattle at Oakland ... 1:00
111. Tampa Bay at Los Angeles ... 1:00

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 7

112. Washington at Baltimore ... (ABC) 9:00

NINTH WEEK

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 13

113. Baltimore at Buffalo ... 1:00
114. Cincinnati at Minnesota ... (NBC) 3:00
115. Cleveland at Pittsburgh ... 1:00
116. Denver at San Diego ... 1:00
117. Detroit at Atlanta ... 1:00
118. Houston at Oakland ... 1:00
119. Kansas City at Chicago ... 1:00
120. Los Angeles vs. Green Bay (Milwaukee) ... 1:00
121. New England at Miami ... 1:00
122. New York Giants at Tampa Bay ... 1:00
123. San Francisco at New Orleans ... 1:00
124. Seattle at New York Jets ... 1:00
125. Washington at Philadelphia ... 1:00

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 14

126. St. Louis at Dallas ... (ABC) 8:00

TENTH WEEK

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 20

127. Atlanta at New Orleans ... 1:00
128. Cleveland at New York Giants ... 1:00
129. Dallas at Pittsburgh ... (CBS) 4:00
130. Denver at Kansas City ... 1:00
131. Houston at Seattle ... 1:00
132. Los Angeles at San Francisco ... 1:00
133. Miami at Cincinnati ... 1:00
134. Minnesota at Chicago ... 1:00
135. New England at Buffalo ... 1:00
136. New York Jets at Baltimore ... 2:00
137. Philadelphia at St. Louis ... 1:00
138. Oakland at San Diego ... 1:00
139. Tampa Bay at Detroit ... 1:00

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 21

140. Green Bay at Washington ... (ABC) 9:00

ELEVENTH WEEK

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24 (Thanksgiving Day)

141. Chicago at Detroit ... (CBS) 12:30
142. Miami at St. Louis ... (NBC) 2:30

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 27

143. Atlanta at Tampa Bay ... 1:00
144. Baltimore at Denver ... 2:00
145. Dallas at Washington ... (CBS) 4:00
146. Kansas City at Houston ... 1:00
147. Los Angeles at Cleveland ... 1:00
148. Minnesota at Green Bay ... 1:00
149. New Orleans at San Francisco ... 1:00
150. New York Giants at Cincinnati ... 1:00
151. Philadelphia at New England ... 1:00
152. Pittsburgh at New York Jets ... 1:00
153. San Diego at Seattle ... 1:00

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 28

154. Buffalo at Oakland ... (ABC) 6:00

TWELFTH WEEK

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4

155. Chicago at Tampa Bay ... 1:00
156. Cincinnati at Kansas City ... 1:00
157. Cleveland at San Diego ... 1:00
158. Denver at Houston ... 1:00
159. Detroit at Green Bay ... 1:00
160. New England at Atlanta ... 1:00
161. New York Jets at New Orleans ... 3:00
162. Philadelphia at Dallas ... 1:00
163. Oakland at Los Angeles ... (NBC) 1:00
164. St. Louis at New York Giants ... 1:00
165. San Francisco at Minnesota ... 1:00
166. Seattle at Pittsburgh ... 1:00
167. Washington at Buffalo ... 1:00

MONDAY, DECEMBER 5

168. Baltimore at Miami ... (ABC) 9:00

THIRTEENTH WEEK

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10

169. Pittsburgh at Cincinnati ... (NBC) 1:00
170. Washington at St. Louis ... (CBS) 2:30

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11

171. Atlanta at Los Angeles ... 1:00
172. Buffalo at New York Jets ... 1:00
173. Detroit at Baltimore ... 2:00
174. Green Bay at Chicago ... 1:00
175. Houston at Cleveland ... 1:00
176. Miami at New England ... 1:00
177. Minnesota at Oakland ... (CBS) 1:00
178. New York Giants at Philadelphia ... 1:00
179. Seattle at Kansas City ... 1:00
180. San Diego at Denver ... 2:00
181. Tampa Bay at New Orleans ... 1:00

MONDAY, DECEMBER 12

182. Dallas at San Francisco ... (ABC) 6:00

FOURTEENTH WEEK

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17

183. Los Angeles at Washington ... (CBS) 1:00
184. Buffalo at Miami ... (NBC) 4:00
185. Minnesota at Detroit ... (ABC) 9:00

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18

186. Chicago at New York Giants ... 1:00
187. Cincinnati at Houston ... 1:00
188. Cleveland at Seattle ... 1:00
189. Denver at Dallas ... 1:00
190. Kansas City at Oakland ... 1:00
191. New England at Baltimore ... (NBC) 4:00
192. New Orleans at Atlanta ... 1:00
193. New York Jets at Philadelphia ... 1:00
194. Pittsburgh at San Diego ... 1:00
195. St. Louis at Tampa Bay ... 1:00
196. San Francisco vs. Green Bay (Milwaukee) ... 1:00

POSTSEASON GAMES

Saturday, December 24 ... AFC Divisional Playoffs (NBC)
Monday, December 26 ... NFC Divisional Playoffs (CBS)
Sunday, January 1 ... AFC Championship Game (NBC)
NFC Championship Game (CBS)
Sunday, January 15 ... Super Bowl XII at Louisiana Superdome, New Orleans (CBS)
Monday, January 23 ... AFC-NFC Pro Bowl at Tampa (night, ABC)

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